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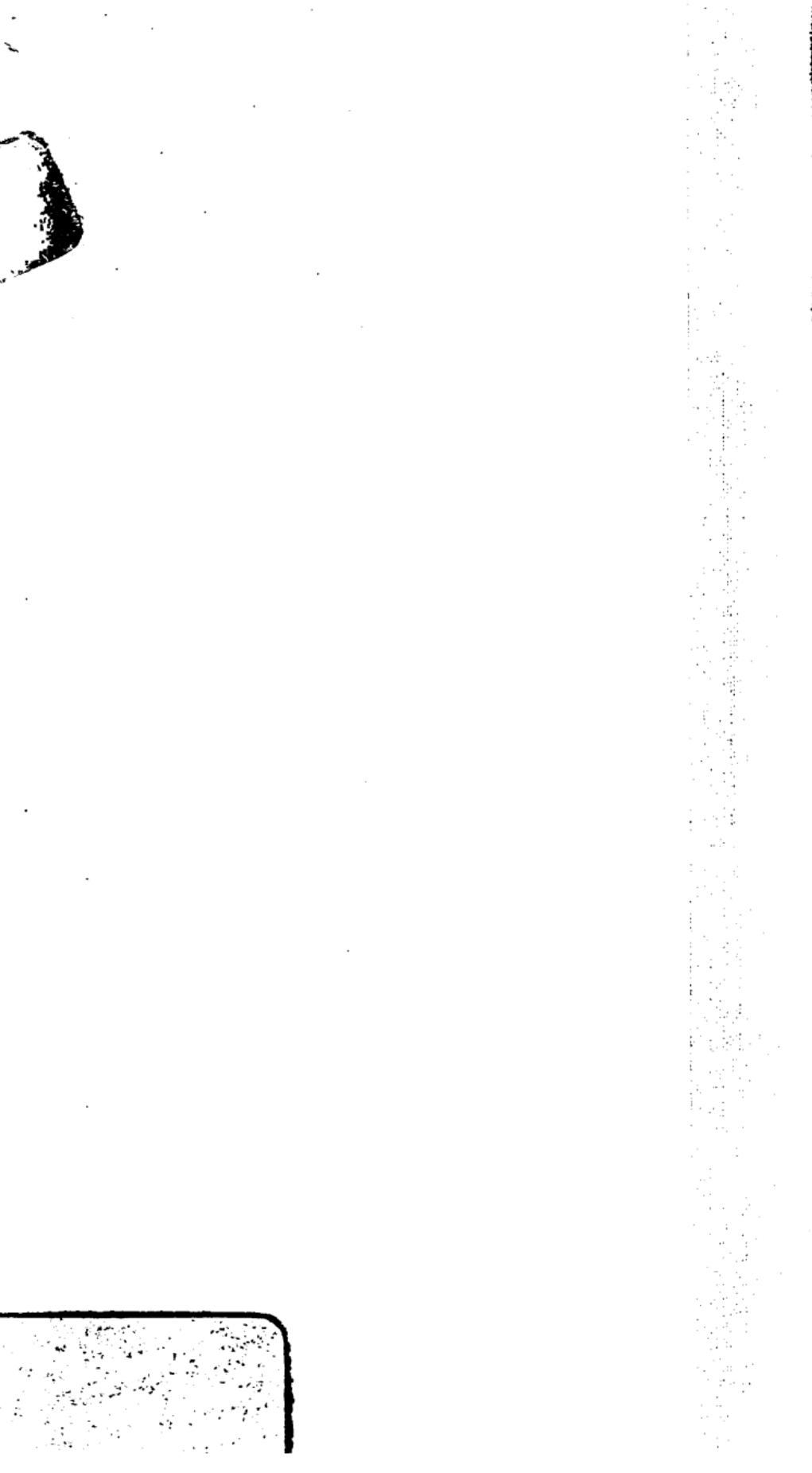
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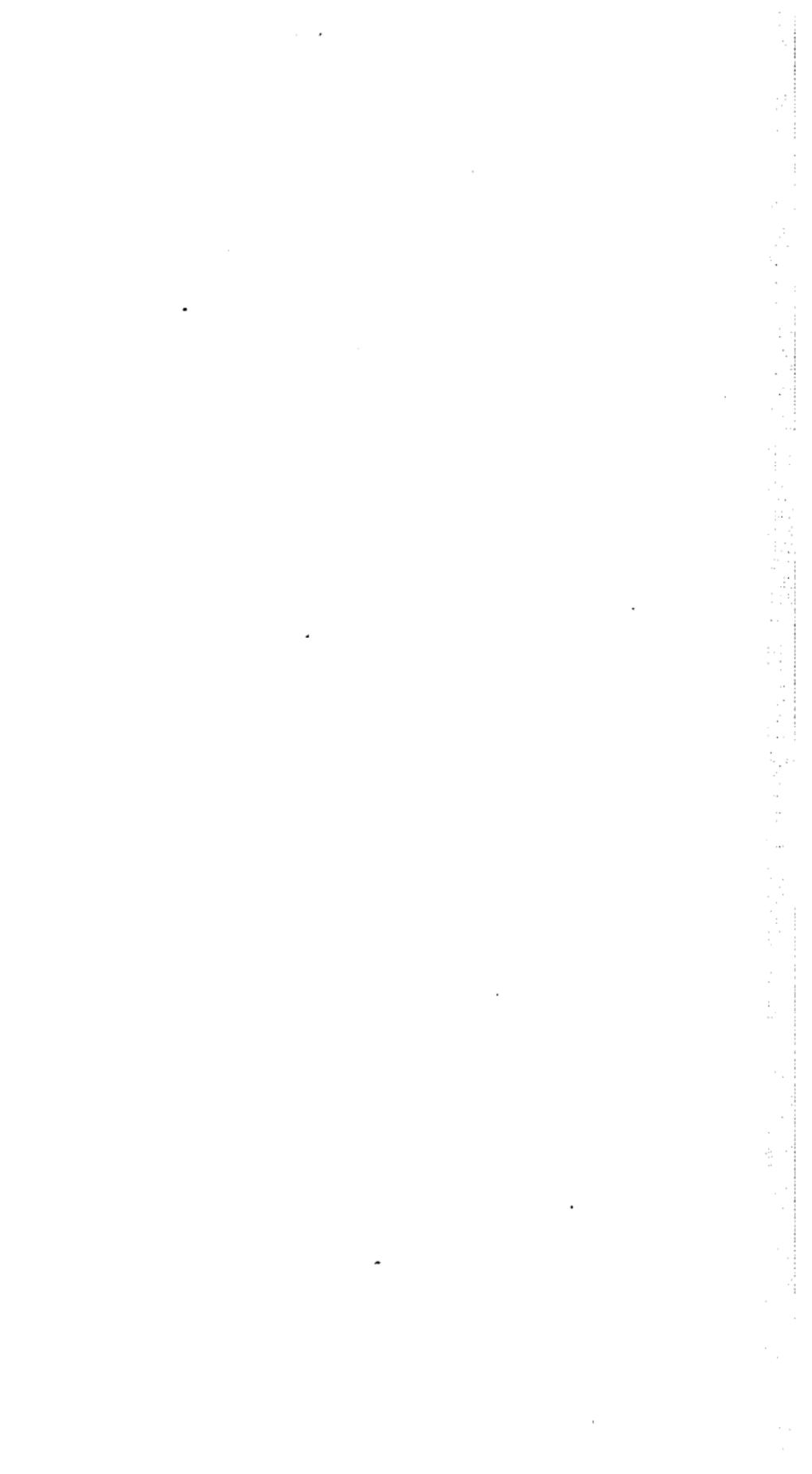
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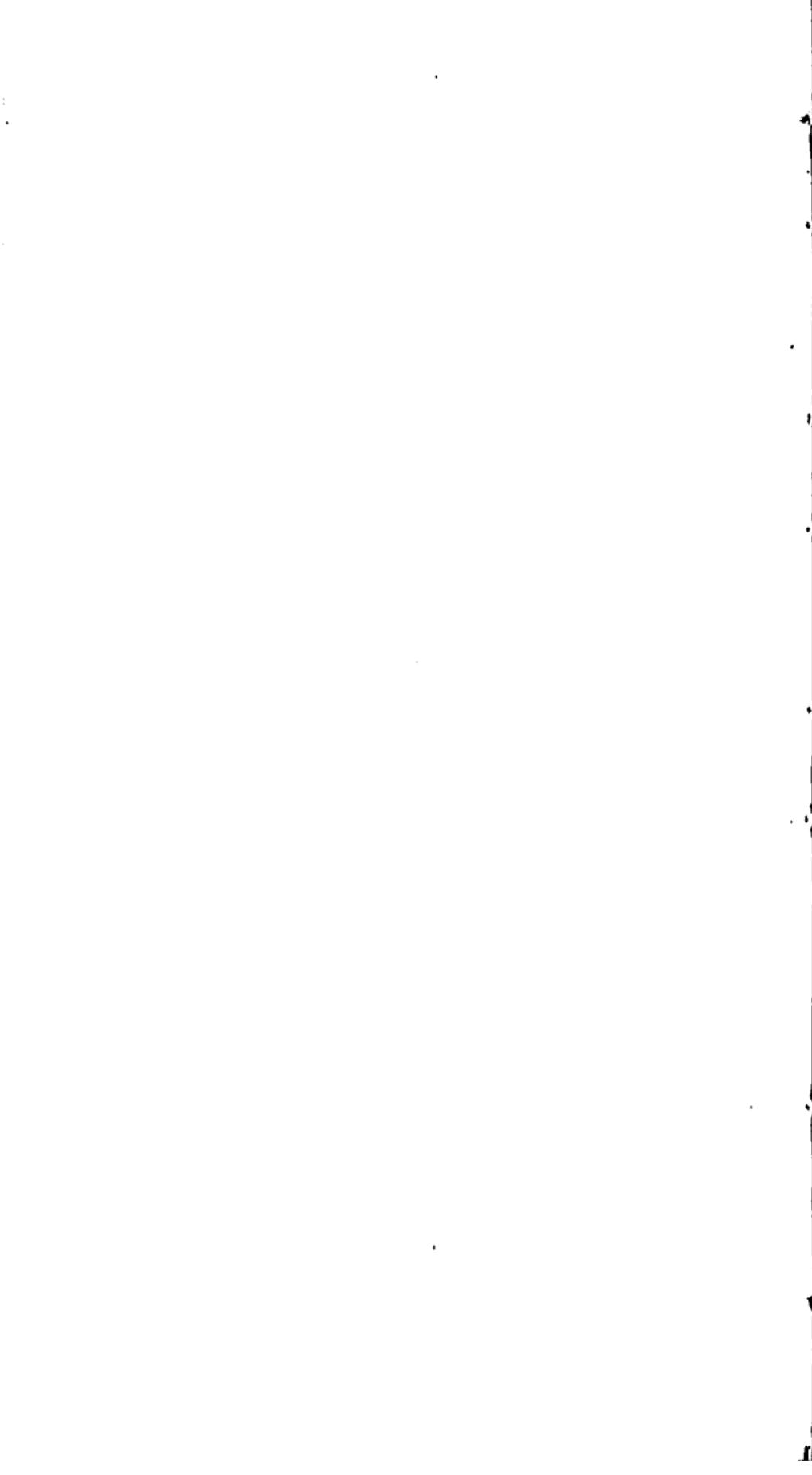
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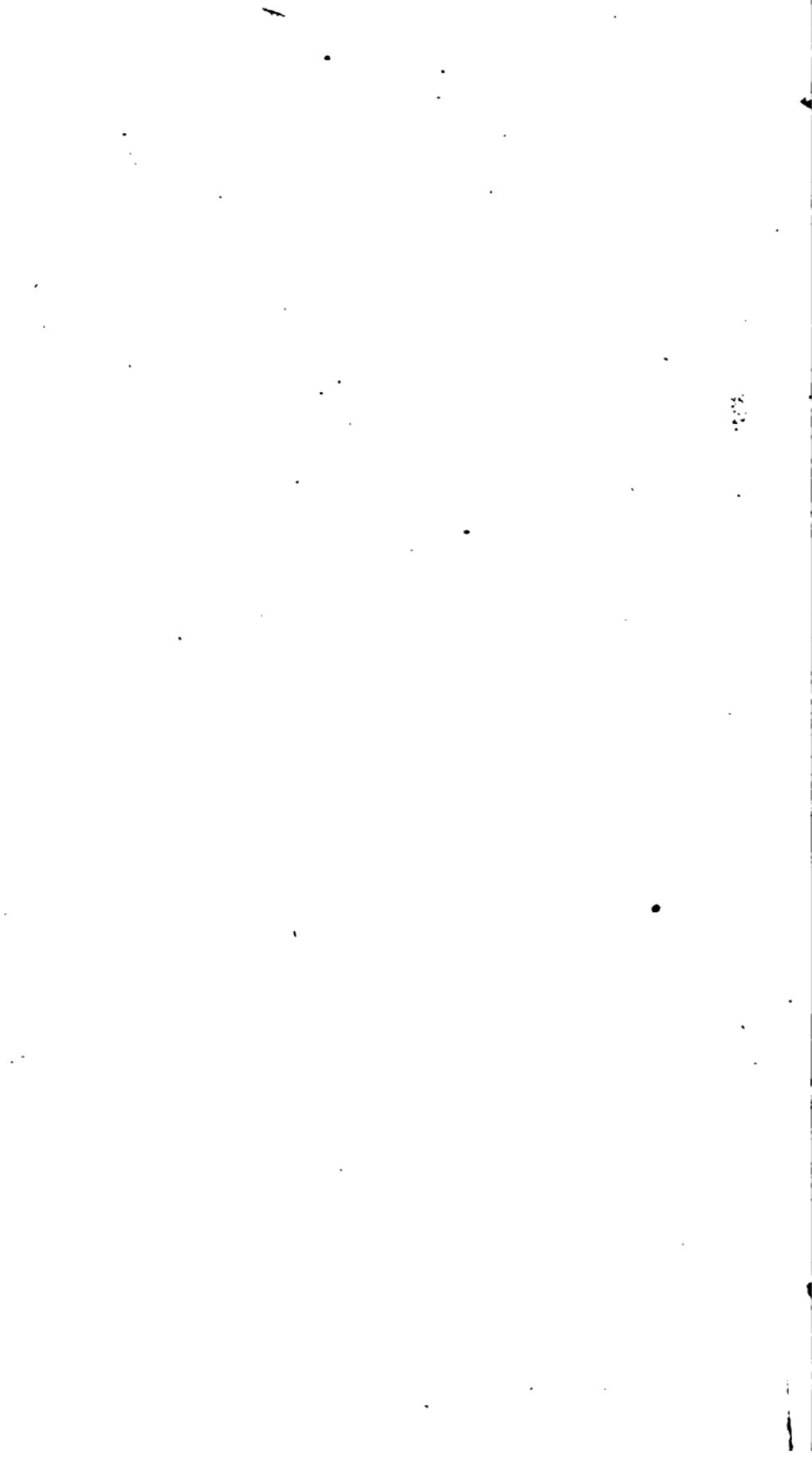
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C. Tyler, Royal 3

THE
YANKEY IN LONDON,

BEING
THE FIRST PART OF

A SERIES OF LETTERS

WRITTEN BY AN AMERICAN YOUTH, DURING NINE
MONTHS' RESIDENCE IN THE CITY OF
LONDON;

ADDRESSED TO HIS FRIENDS IN AND NEAR BOSTON,
MASSACHUSETTS.

VOLUME I.

Εγενόμη το μη ταξιδεύων Πότε.

THUCYD.

NEW-YORK:

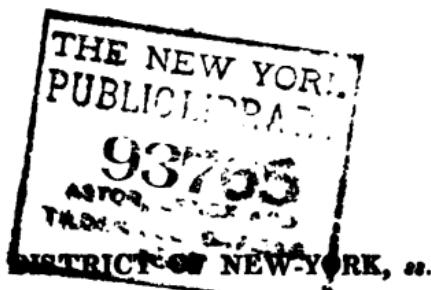
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY ISAAC RILEY.

.....

1809.

75

★ F. SHELDON



BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twenty-third day of September, in the thirty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America, ISAAC RILEY, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"The Yankee in London, being the first part of a series
"of letters written by an American youth during nine
"months' residence in the city of London, addressed to his
"friends in and near Boston, Massachusetts. Volume I.

"Εγράψα, τις μη τινας ζητώντες Πέτρο.

"THUCYD."

IN CONFORMITY to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an act, entitled, "An act, supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

CHARLES CLINTON,

Clerk of the District of New-York,

PREFACE.

WHEN a new book is about to be published, the early solicitude of the author is to pave his way to public favour by apologizing for his presumption in appearing in print; but the writer of the following letters cannot, or, rather, will not, speak for himself: it remains therefore for his friends to make known to the reader, all that they are permitted to communicate respecting the author, his work, and the motives for publication.

The writer of these letters, now collected and presented to the public under the title of The Yankey in London, is a native of Boston, in Massachusetts, known to his fellow-townsmen as a young man of modest merit, and only known to a few particular friends as a gentleman of an active and inquisitive mind, and of quaint, and oftentimes original remark.

The letters now submitted to the candour of his countrymen, were, with numerous others in possession of his correspondents,

written, during his abode in London, to several of his friends and connections in his native town, without the most distant view of their ever being printed. On his return, they solicited permission to publish them, perhaps, in the ardour of friendship, vainly imagining that what had delighted them would please others, but he repeatedly declined their solicitations.

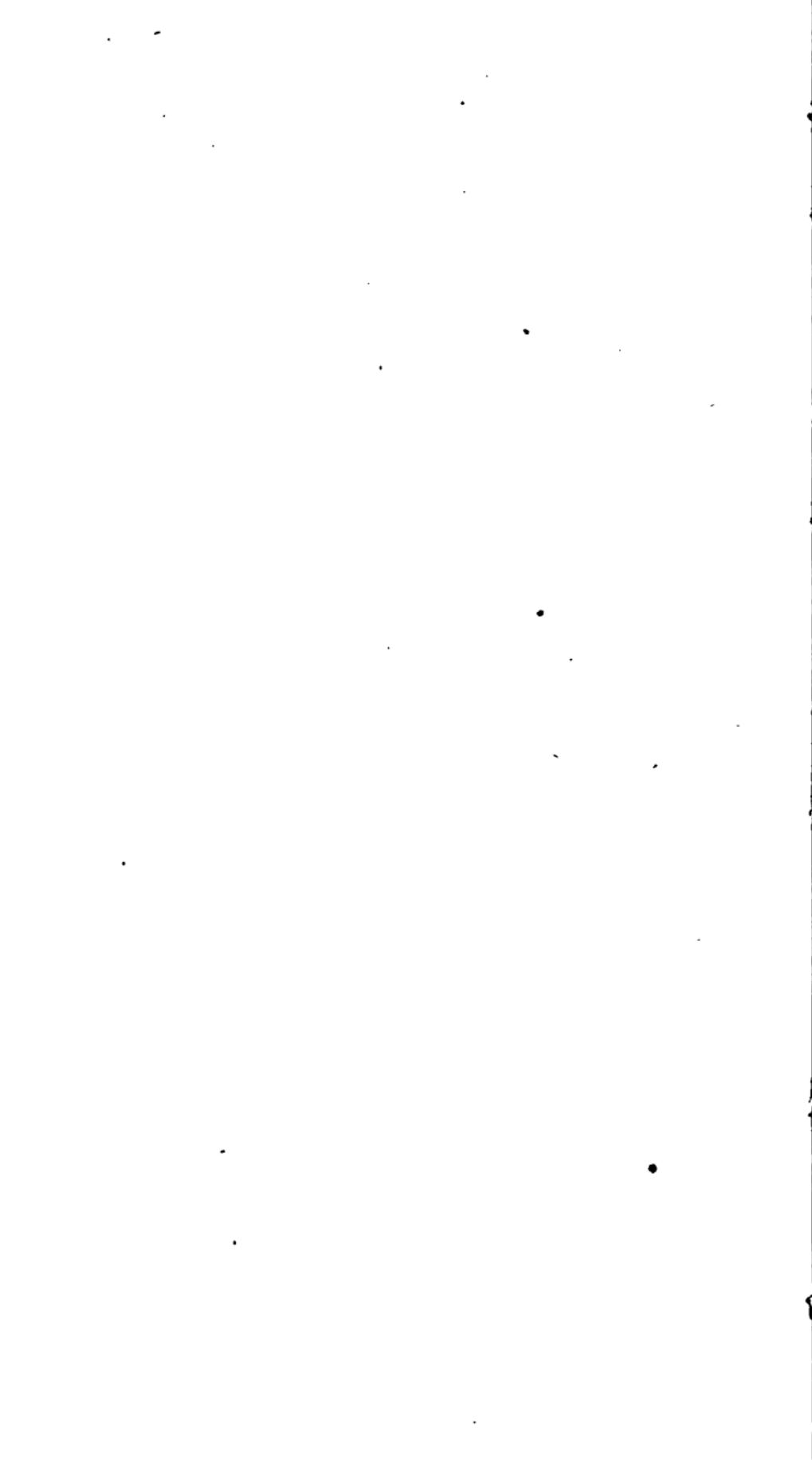
In the course of the last winter the originals of these letters, with many others addressed from London, were deposited with an amanuensis who faithfully transcribed them, and the manuscript was submitted, in confidence, to a clergyman of taste; he approved the design of publication, and lent his friendly aid to overcome the diffidence of the writer, but in vain. The manuscript was afterwards perused, with the author's permission, by an English gentleman, visiting Boston; he made light of the author's modesty, and advised the publication, observing, that as the writer had imbibed a large share of local prejudice, his work would be read by his own countrymen, and should it make its way to London it might, perhaps, be

PREFACE.

read, even there, as a curious specimen of transatlantic sentiment upon English manners. A reluctant consent was then obtained from the writer, upon the express condition of expunging such passages as might lead to a discovery of the author, and of selecting a few of the letters, and those the least likely to give offence to English people, for whom, after all his freedom of remark, he professes a high veneration.

We have therefore directed the printer to issue these letters as volume the first, and are not without hope that the approbation of the public will give confidence to our friend to publish the remainder of his letters from London and other parts of the British isles, and his tour in Europe, with his own name.

The Friends of the Writer.



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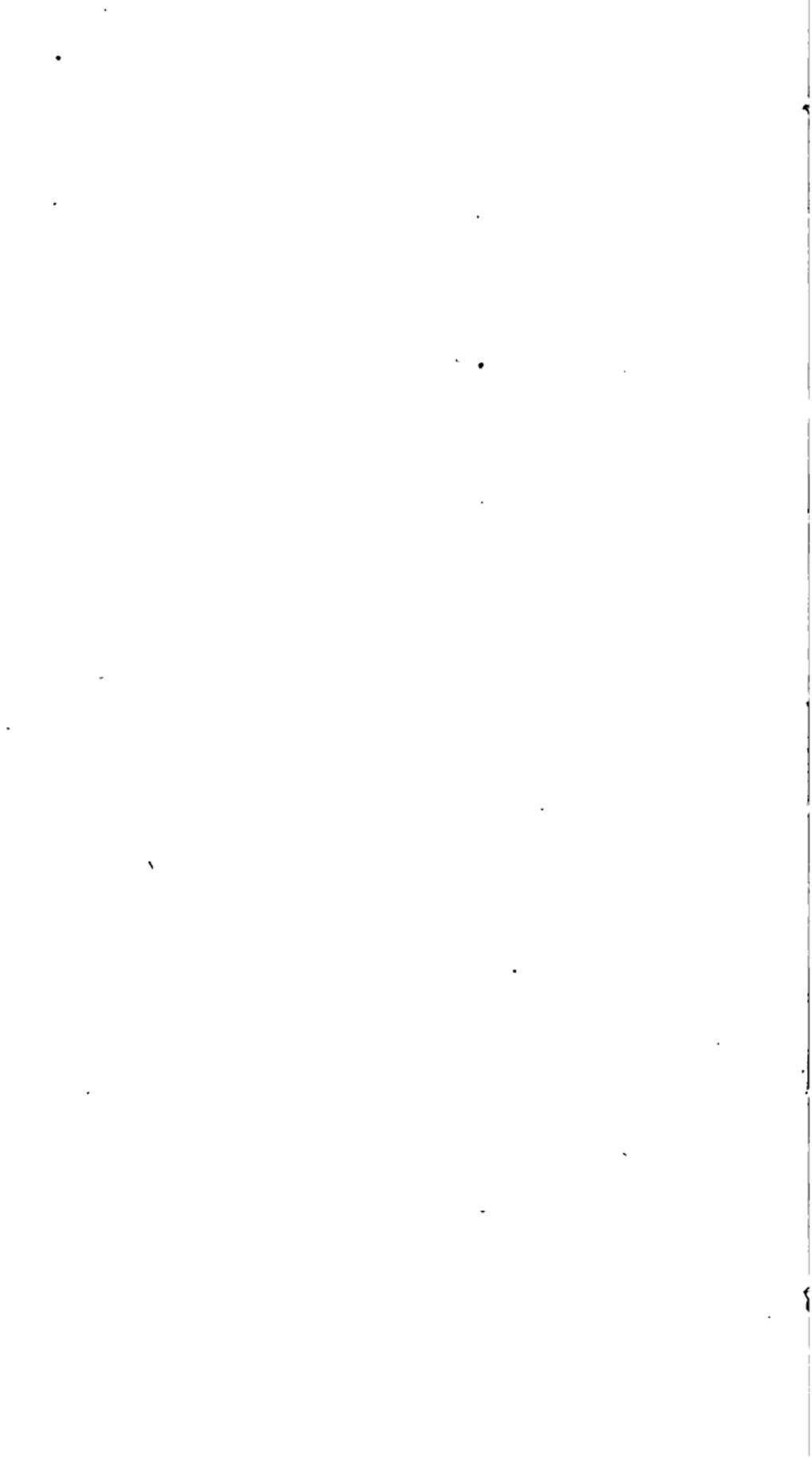
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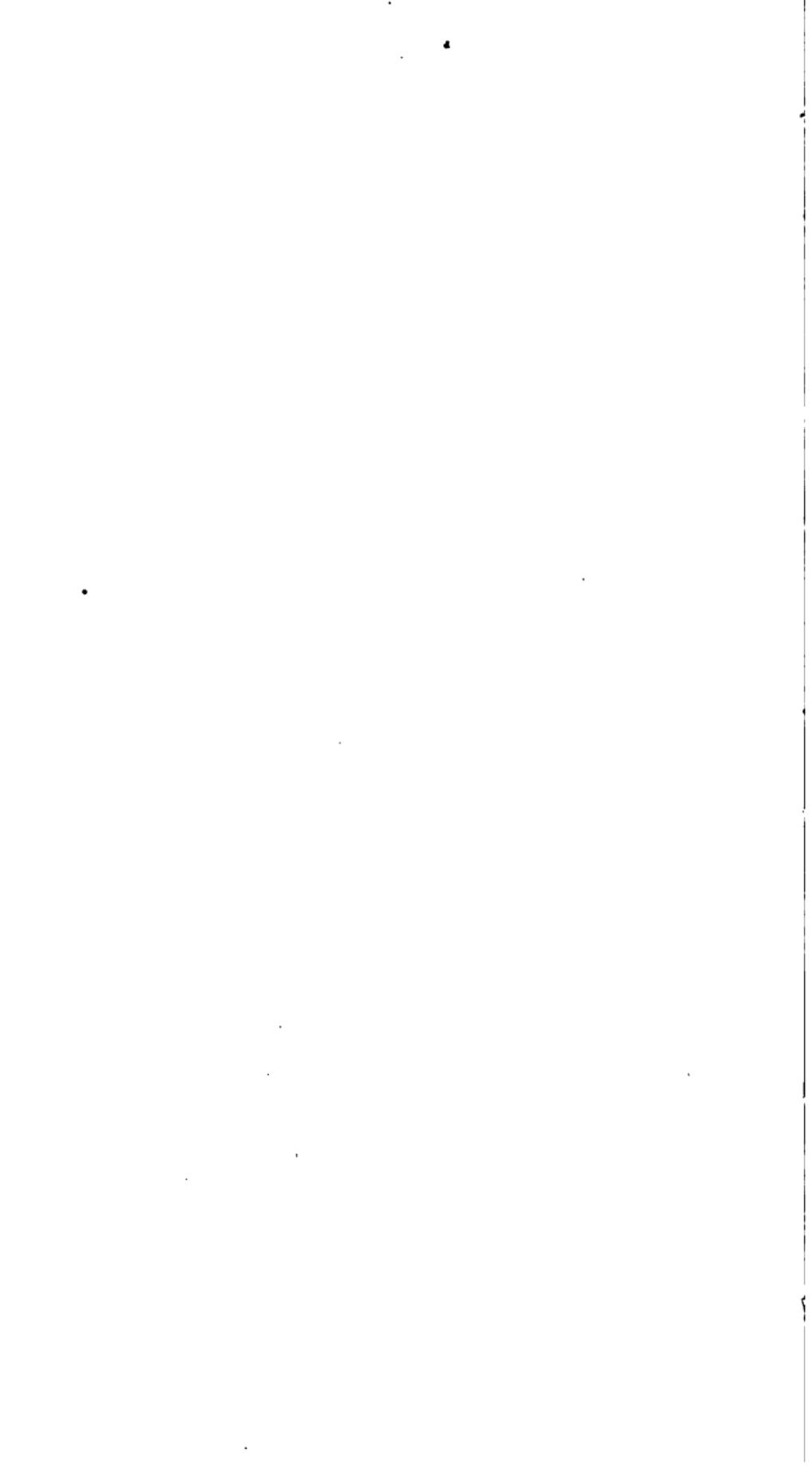
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YANKEY IN LONDON.

LETTER III.

Prominent traits in the English character.

LONDON.

My dear Chum,

ACCEPT my warmest thanks for the letters of introduction you presented me at parting, and for those transmitted me by the ship Union ; and suffer me, through you, to make my grateful acknowledgments to Mr. G. for his very friendly proffer of making me known to some “ excellent English friends.”—I do assure you, very few of our countrymen have left in London such favourable impressions of the American character as that

A

gentleman. Indeed, all our United States' agents have done honour to our national diplomacy : among them Mr. K. and Mr. G. will be long distinguished ; the former for the classical elegance of his bureau address, the latter for his commercial science—and both for that dignified, polished demeanour which European gentlemen will hardly admit can be attained without the tour of that continent. I ought, in justice, to observe, that our present envoy is a gentleman highly esteemed for the suavity of his manners, and respected for his adherence to the commercial rights of his nation.

I have not yet delivered Judge C.'s letter to him : it is under a flying seal, and merely recommendatory. A man of letters, whose notice I am solicitous to retain, mentioned my name to him yesterday, and was surprised to find he did not know me ; and, as this gentleman lives within the purlieus of court and etiquette, I shall suffer in his opinion if, as an

American, I am not known to our minister. I must therefore deliver my letter, although, I assure you, with reluctance.— Of forty-three letters of introduction, I have as yet delivered but three, and two of them related to pecuniary arrangements.—I crossed the Atlantic to obtain health, and, now I am in London, I wish to form a correct opinion of this people. If I had delivered my letters and been introduced to people of rank, my observations would have been confined to them; for there is a wonderful and striking similarity in people of the same condition. By the aid of letters I might probably have gone the rounds of diplomatic dinners, or, possibly, been in company with ladies and lords, but it was not ladies and lords I wished to see. A man would form a very erroneous opinion of English diet, should he feast entirely on ortolans; no—he should eat the roast-beef, the mutton from the Downs, and the rump-steak. I wished to see *Englishmen*,

and to form some correct estimate of their manners, habits, and character, and this can be better attained by mingling, unnoticed in the crowd. I wish to be considered, and to consider myself, as Addison humorously describes himself in his spectatorial character, "as the dumb gentleman whom nobody minds." O, that I possessed the inky cloak of Fortunatus, that I might pass invisibly through this vast metropolis, and note, unobserved, this immense crowd, as various in character as in their motleyed ancestry. Besides, I had another reason for omitting to deliver my letters, which, perhaps, you will say is a weak, and I am sure you may say is a vain one. I found I could acquire, if not friends, very valuable acquaintance, without them, and an acquaintance acquired by accidental converse with persons of merit, flatters our self-love. We think we cannot be greatly mistaken, in estimating our own worth, when we break over all those outworks of etiquette with

which the European fortifies himself against imposition, or when we can overcome that national reserve and hauteur in which every Englishman is deeply entrenched. I assure you I have acquired, without the formality of introduction, some very valuable, some learned, and some opulent acquaintance.

The English will tell you, and tell you truly, that no man obtains admission into what is called good company, without *a proper recommendation*. It is manifest, the English are very shy of strangers, especially foreigners, whom the middle and lower classes hold in contempt, and the higher ranks are hardly willing to acknowledge as their equals, let their talents or rank be what they may. An Englishman, in his own country, shrinks from familiarity with a stranger, and, if offered abruptly, will consider it an insult : unless he be well recommended, he will not introduce the stranger to his wife, daughters, or domestic circles. But, if a man once

gets into *good company*, (which every Englishman applies to persons of his own rank, or employment,) and is noticed by *certain people*, the Englishman will not, perhaps, inquire very critically how he got there, but will accept it as a letter of recommendation, and the stranger passes current into his intimacy.

The difference between the English and their American descendants, in this particular, is—the Englishman is shy and suspicious, grows more suspicious, and is surly. The New-England man is suspicious and inquisitive, grows more suspicious, and is familiar and troublesome. When once the Englishman's suspicions are dissipated (no matter how) he is unbounded in his confidence ; while the Yankey shews very little distrust, is never silent or surly to the stranger, but his suspicions never leave him. Now, in London, there are various modes of getting into *good company*, and being noticed by *certain people*, and the process is not so formida-

ble as you may imagine. But you must first decide what is good company ; for what one class calls good another will esteem mean, and a severe moralist might style all the associations of fashionable life very bad companies. If you call the high-ranked jockies of Newmarket good company, and your purse will permit, you have merely to purchase a few race-horses and fillies, bet high, pay your bets and your grooms punctually, and you will soon be *noticed by certain people*—your gold will quickly amalgamate with their mercury.

Do you wish to have an honourable seat with honourable ladies, and no less honourable gentlemen, at the card-table, dress well, have your pockets well lined with gold, be polite enough never to detect the ladies in renouncing, or to dun either lady or gentleman for a debt of *honour*, and you may keep *very good company*, and be noticed by *certain people*, until your money is gone. If you go to the

stock exchange—but you will say “pho,
 “ pho, there is no mystery in all this—
 “ I naturally supposed in London, as in
 “ Boston, money can effect every thing—
 “ make a clown a gentleman, and a fool
 “ a bank director.” Well, then, I will
 shew you how, if you was as poor as the
 shabbiest author that ever

“Sighed in soft murmurs through a broken
 “ pane,”

in the loftiest garret of the ancient grub-street, you may get into *good company*, and be noticed by *certain people*.

You know—all the world knows, the English are fond of *national* glory, but you are yet to be informed that every Englishman pants for *individual* glory. His great object is personal distinction; not merely the distinction of birth or riches—these are common in this old and commercial government, but by some quality which shall distinguish him from all others; for this self-ambition aims

rather at singularity than exaltation : and it is curious to observe what a variety of modes are adopted, even by those of rank and opulence, to obtain distinction by singularity. One man will let his beard grow, live on roots, and affect the anchorite : another is circumcised : a third, with the eyes of a lynx, will wear temple-spectacles in the open street, at noon-day ; a fourth will affect to be deprived of all his senses, and, in a social circle, enlivened by beauty, wit, and mirth, neither see, hear, observe or remark, any more than his kindred poker by the grate side. But of all those animated by this noble ambition and affectation of singularity, there are two who, in my very humble opinion, bear the palm from all competitors :—one cut off the skirts of his coat, close to his waistband, and set the fashion you now have in Boston, called the spencer—and the other *eat a live cat* !

I believe there never was a time in England when this affectation of singu-

larity did not prevail. It may, perhaps, be fairly traced to the painted skins of their Pictish ancestors. Formerly, in this country, a man might make himself distinguished by profound learning, but, alas ! the era of the profound and original in English literature terminated with the life of the last regal Stuart. In these costermonger days, learning (like every thing else in England) is submitted to counting-house calculation ; and the making of books becomes as much a trade as the binding of them : an occupation which does not require seven years' apprenticeship to set up the business, but in which all may labour without infringement of city privileges. Learning, however, keeps no wholesale warehouse ; but what the modern English imagine to be literature is retailed in a thousand toy-shops : here, playthings for these nursery children of learning are vended—here, they purchase squeaking sonnets, lullaby odes, dub adub verse, and tinselled prose. Where it is

so easy to be learned and so many *are learned*, those who affect literature must also affect singularity to make themselves distinguished. To be distinguished from the common machinists of verse is “worth “ambition;” therefore, on this principle, a number of literary clubs have been formed, where the members, by clubbing their talents, and the appellation they give to their club, (which is generally quaint or grotesque,) attempt to singularize themselves into notice, and if they fail in obtaining it they are sure to console their vanity by the flatteries they very liberally bestow on each other at their stated meetings.

These societies have increased amazingly since the literary club, founded by Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke, and others, became known, by their attendance at the funeral of David Garrick, the celebrated actor, who was a member. In such clubs the national distinction of rank is levelled, which, if they were associations

of genius and learning, would be perfectly correct.

The ladies, it seems, have their clubs ; and the Roman orgies of the *bona Dea* are revived with this variation, that the men are initiated into their mysteries. Mrs. Montagu, a very respectable lady, was the foundress of a club of this sort, known by the quaint name of the *blue-stockings club*. Whether this anti-genteel epithet originated in the fancy or the feet of the fair, as it is a subject of rather delicate research, I had not the effrontery to peer into. Now, as a friend to the fair, and a lover of the muses, you must allow a *blue-stockings club* to consist of the very best of *good company*. Then, my dear Chum, if you wish an introduction, carry with you no letter of civility, but hasten to your ink-pot, tag me a hundred lines to some languishing Anna Matilda, or dying Dorinda ; spangle them well with bland metaphors and love-lorn similes ; drop a word or two in some lines, and insert others in capital

letters, so as to render the meaning unintelligible, and then, of course, you know it must be sublime : or write a lugubrious sonnet to some captive mouse, or pretty pathetic ode to a sportive mouser,

Who on the bosom of the spangled eve,
With velvet step and deeply dulcet breath,
Purs for his attic love !—

select some sweet fanciful name, which will “ run trippingly o'er the tongue,” such as Valentina Orsona, Assenella Crusca, or Idiotilla, or any other name more significant of the attributes of your muse ; carry the soft effusions of your melancholy muse to the editors of the most fashionable magazine ; and, after you have *love-learned* enough to make a little volume of verse, publish your works, boldly, under your own name : make your personal appearance in the frontispiece, with your temples bound with laurel, a brace of simpering muses by your side, a basket of iris and crocus and daf.

fodowndilly at your feet, a strong plump-cheeked fame with his brazen trumpet at your back—(*N. B.* for a certain reason it is absolutely necessary the trumpet should be *brass*) and then inscribe your volume to the honourable, or right honourable, Mrs. —, the patroness of some blue-stocking club, beginning your dedication thus :—“ Madam, your exalted genius, “ correct taste, and elegant knowledge of “ ancient and modern learning, so richly “ displayed in that incomparable poem, “ your divine ode to the sleeping Cicada,” &c. &c. &c. being careful to be equally delicate in your adulation throughout. Then, if you are not the most unfortunate wight of a poet who ever attempted the temple of fame, you will be invited to the club, be enrolled as a member, and, perhaps, have your name immortalized in the next Ladies’ Diary.

It is true, the reviewers, those crusty critics, may ridicule you, but the bold sons and daughters of genius never regard

them ; be assured, they are fellows of no mark or likelihood ; what little they know has been acquired from Longinus, Aristotle, and Horace, or some such outlandish creatures. A very pretty lady observed to me, that the monthly reviewers were the most petrifying creatures imaginable in matters of taste ; and she was an excellent judge, as she had published a novel which contained an immense black forest of twenty aged trees ; two crazy castles ; three murderers ; a trap-door with rusty bolts ; a bloody key, ditto dagger ; two pair of broken stairs ; a sheeted ghost ; a ghostly monk, and a marriage. She assured me, '*pon honour*, that in the critique upon her work (which had passed the ordeal of taste in all the circulating libraries, and was actually the last book the great Burke ever read, indeed, some said he expired with it in his hand) the reviewers were so stupid they could not comprehend the elegant expressions "pleasing anguish," "delightful despair,"

and “ heart-rending felicity ;” nay, they had the audacity to sneer at the phrase “ subterraneous matter in the clouds,” which she had introduced into a thunder-storm, and which the whole blue-stockings club pronounced immensely sublime.

Which of the above routes I took to *good company*, or what other path I selected, I leave you to conjecture until some future letter or conversation shall enlighten you.

Your old and sincere friend.

LETTER V.

The British House of Commons.

LONDON.

My excellent Friend,

THROUGH the politeness of a friend, I was yesterday admitted to the gallery of the British house of commons. Never were a man's expectations higher raised. To see the grave fathers of the senate, the collected wisdom of a nation known by its commercial enterprise, its colonies and its victories, throughout the habitable globe, was, indeed, a spectacle so august that I anticipated it with pleasure tempered by reverence : not that I expected to see the curule chairs, the fasces and lictors of the Roman forum, or to discover, in British countenances, that inflexible composure of

features which dignified the conscript father slain in his ivory chair by the barbarian Gaul; but I had reason to expect to see a solemn assembly of wise, dignified men, in sober consultation upon the important concerns of the greatest commercial nation in the world. In an assembly of hereditary legislators, like the house of lords, there might be dignity, but a general display of great talents, as it is fortuitous, could not be expected. In the house of commons, elected from the great body of the people, I justly expected to find the talents, the learning, the wisdom and political science of a wise nation collected in one brilliant focus ; to hear the persuasion of Cicero, the subtlety of Eschines, the thunder of Demosthenes, with all I had read, and more than I could conceive, of ancient eloquence, poured from British lips in language nobler than that of Greece or Rome.

It seems, in going at too early an hour, I had committed the common blunder of

the plebeian who is invited to dine with my lord. I had taken my seat in the gallery full three hours before the feast of reason was served up : there were only a few official attendants of the house present. After a while, several gentlemen came in, booted and spurred as if from a fox-chase: they formed little parties of chit-chat. As I understood several of them were members of parliament, I was not a little anxious to hear them converse, hoping to stay my appetite with some eleemosynary scraps of wisdom, as we, in Boston, take a relish of punch and oysters, at noon, to prepare the appetite when invited to a fashionable dinner. I was soon gratified ; two of them came within hearing, and seemed earnestly engaged in discourse. Aye, thought I, now you are untwisting some knotty fiscal point, or quoting Puffendorf, Grotius, and Vattel on the laws of nations, or citing passages from the laws of Oleron, to correct the defects of your maritime code.— Suddenly, one of them vociferated—“done

" for five hundred guineas ; Creeper
" against Sweeper; feather weight." Now,
as Creeper and Sweeper were two authors
upon political economy of whom I had
never heard, I was somewhat chagrined.
To be sure, to hear the great statesmen
of this great nation converse in my native
tongue and be unable to comprehend
them, was rather mortifying. I was so
simple that, at first, I thought the learned
Creeper might have written a commentary
on Smith's wealth of nations, and that the
erudite Sweeper had illustrated Dr. Price's
essay on finance, by the negative quanti-
ties of algebra. *Feather weight*, I naturally
concluded, alluded to the balance of power
in Europe.—One of the senators roared
out, " My lord ! my lord !" and, upon a
nobleman's approach, said, familiarly,
" ha, Clermont ! I have betted five hun-
" dred guineas on your gelding, Creeper,
" against Featherstone's Sweeper, provi-
" ded my groom, Jim Twamley, rides."
" I beg your pardon, Sir John," replied

his lordship ; “ no man straddles my fa-
“ vourite horse, upon the turf, but my-
“ self ;—but I will back you for five
“ hundred more, and ride myself. Why,
“ you know, knight, that I beat Sky-
“ Scraper, at the heats for the king’s
“ plate, and took the long odds, though
“ Twamley rode Sky-Scraper, and I car-
“ ried weight.” Not as a politician, I
hope—I aspirated. It was now apparent
these members of parliament were also
members of that sublime political semi-
nary the jockey club. I had, however,
candour enough to consider that all great
public bodies must exhibit some weak
and indecorous members ; and, as the
house began to fill, I observed many gen-
tlemen whose appearance would have done
honour to the areopagus of Athens.—The
speaker, a dignified man, arrayed in an
imposing costume, took the chair. The
house was immediately called to order,
and business commenced ; but it was not
very interesting, being merely the passage

of certain bills, through the routine of the house. The seats were soon filled, and the minister arose to open what is called the *budget*. This *beggarly* term, which impresses a stranger with the tags, rags, and jags of a beggar's pack, is, however, not unaptly chosen ; for, in this region of taxes, there are few objects so mean as not to be included in this *financiering budget*. The minister, in a plain style, and monotonous voice, remarked on the various expenditures of the past, and the taxes necessary to be levied to meet the present, exigencies. He acknowledged that the war with France was commenced on very different principles from which it was now to be maintained. He endeavoured to elucidate those principles ; but I was so dull I could not comprehend him, which I sincerely regret, as it has long been an object of curiosity, with me, to discover why Great Britain involved herself in this ruinous war ; but he was very clear that, however the war began, it was now to be

maintained on a principle of self-defence ; and he seemed to console himself in the reflection, that, as the nation now contended for her very existence, the people could not require any more substantial reason for the augmentation of taxes. He was heard with patience, but no sooner seated than half a dozen members arose in opposition, and there was some time lost in deciding who should speak ; and I thought rather too much disorder in producing order. The second orator spoke with much more animation, but was heard with much less patience. He had prepared a very bitter philippic against the ministry, which, to me, scented very strongly of the midnight oil. He represented the nation as on the verge of ruin ; miserable at home, and a laughing-stock abroad : he displayed a novel style of rhetoric : he was generally, although he spoke in a higher key, as monotonous as the minister : he accented and emphasized whole sentences instead of syllables or words : he had co-

piously enriched his speech with quotations from the English classics, and, when he came to those passages, he would prepare himself by a pause, cast his eyes towards the treasury-bench, (a seat occupied by such of the administration as are members of this house,) and pronounce the quotation in an octave above his common tone, and sometimes repeating it with "sir, I say," "sir, I am bold to say," "sir, I do not hesitate in saying." After about two hours' exertion, he seemed suddenly to arouse all his energies, and, casting his eyes indignantly towards the treasury-bench, vociferated "Mr. Speaker, "I am bold to say 'there is something rotten in the state of Denmark,' and I now crave the attention of honourable members while I point out this defective plank in the vessel of the common wealth, and drag from their lurking-holes those pestiferous worms who are gnawing the foundations of the constitution;"—but ere he could extract one of

this “ corporation of politic worms,” he was interrupted by a burst of clamour—order ! order ! order !—hear him ! hear him ! hear him ! was the cry. Amidst this hubbub I thought I could distinguish sounds very like coughing and shuffling the feet, but there is something so wretchedly vulgar in such conduct I had rather discredit my own ears than impute it to such a venerable body : indeed, there was something so indecorous, and at the same time so ludicrous, in the whole scene, I hesitated whether to laugh or weep. The cry of order ! order ! was vociferated in accents so similar to the play-house off ! off ! to a hissed actor, my first impression was that, by the wand of Harlequin, the commons had been changed to Covent-garden theatre, and I seated in the shilling-gallery, and I could scarcely forbear exclaiming, to this legislative orchestra, caira, caira ! roast-beef, roast-beef ! God save the king !—After a while something like silence (which, however, would be

called an uproar in any decent assembly) was produced. The orator attempted to speak again, but part of his speech being struck out, by a decision of order from the chair, so deranged the whole that, after some abortive attempts to splice the rope of his rhetoric, he sat down, apparently exulting in the confusion he had made.

A slender, dapper member now arose, (the very reverse of the hoary ancient who quieted the tumult in the *Æneid*,) and suddenly restored good-humour. The sole object of this pert, voluble legislator, seemed to be to say smart things ; in which, with some help from those standing English wits, Joe Miller, Quin, and Ben Jonson, and some quotations from "Laugh " and be fat," he was, indeed, very successful. He compared the requisitions of a *certain* popular leader, to obtain a view of certain secret negotiations, and the reply of the cabinet minister, to a story which he said he had read in a *learned* author.

the nation, convened in solemn assembly to deliberate on mighty subjects, which involved not only their own existence, as a state, but the welfare and peace of the world, I beheld them listening to the bald jokes of a mountebank, and grinning like clowns at his ribaldry—by the bones of my English ancestors, I could have gone backwards, like the children of Noah, and cast a garment over my parents' nakedness.—I have visited the house several times since, but found it changed

“ From gay to grave, from lively to severe.”—

The house was very thin, scarcely a business quorum, although I thought the subjects in debate very momentous. When the question, however, was about to be taken, absent members seemed to have notice—came thronging in, and voted as if they had been prepared by deliberate investigation. Now, there is more propriety in this than your Yankey imagination would at first conceive. As

these evanescent members are all pledged to their party, and have actually had their minds made up for them, you must be sensible it would be of no use for any one of them to hear arguments in favour of his own decided prepossession, and arguments on the other side might tend to raise doubts of the rectitude and wisdom of his leaders, and to entertain such doubts would be an unpardonable weakness in a true-bred politician. They have, I am told, a practice for members on opposite sides to pair off, to save themselves from the tedium of a debate. Now, this is equally rational; for if a pair of intellectual balances could be provided, the talents of these pairs would so nicely equi-ponderate that the wisdom of either party in the house would be diminished in accurate proportion. Indeed, it is to be lamented that this mode of pairing off, which is at present confined to the mute, could not be extended to the speaking members; for although the fewer the

members the less disquiet may be expected in a noisy and quarrelsome family, yet, if the promoters of discord, the brutal husband and scolding wife, would sometimes *pair off*, it might wonderfully conduce to the quiet of the mansion.

But, to be serious; amidst all the bustle and puerility of the British house of commons, I have heard some gentlemen, who, if you, who have been modelled from the ancient schools, would not acknowledge to be orators, yet you would allow them to be sensible men, speaking pertinently upon subjects which they seemed intimately to comprehend, and in language which might pass from their lips to the press, and, without correction, be read and admired as specimens of fine, if not energetic speaking.



LETTER VIII.

The House of Lords.

LONDON.

My excellent Friend,

THIS day I visited the *house of lords*. I assure you I had devested myself of all my republican prejudices against this assembly of hereditary legislators. I can readily perceive the propriety of the existence of such a body, in a limited monarchy, who can guard the constitution against the popular intemperance of the house of commons on one hand, and the extension of the royal prerogative on the other. English history records honourable instances of its utility in both these particulars; and their extinction by the

long parliament should be a memento to the British nation, that whenever the house of lords is annihilated the crown will be involved in its destruction, and the commons made the tools of a despot. Their high rank and proud titles are also objects of emulation : they are at the disposal of the sovereign, and not unfrequently conferred as the mede of merit. They are to the British, what the civic crowns, the ovations, triumphal cars and arches, were to the ancient Romans ; and their soldiers and sailors seek for nobility in the cannon's mouth.

The house of lords is to the house of commons, in point of decorum, what the Opera-house is to Drury-lane theatre.—Here is no shilling-gallery, no cat-calls, no vulgar vociferation ; but, then, even an opera is not without its absurdities. It exhibits heroes in recitative, dancing princes, and British lions, who, like Nick Bottom, “ can roar you like any sucking dove.”

The noble lords were not convened, at this time, in their legislative capacity, but were sitting, as a high court of errors, to revise a judgment rendered by the court of king's bench. This was quite an interesting scene to me. A hereditary legislature has something essentially ludicrous to the mind of a republican ; but *hereditary judges*, men supposed to be born with an intuitive knowledge of Norman French, and monkish Latin, and, in opposition to the doctrine of Locke, come into the world with their minds impressed with the innate and complex ideas of their municipal code, and possess, by birth, what my Lord Coke calls the perfection of human reason, which cannot be acquired by the plebeian except by the intense study of a long life, might provoke the risibility of even Littleton himself.

This baronial bench seemed to me even more absurd than the court of errors in the state of Connecticut, where the council of that state, composed generally of plain

farmers, correct the judgments of their supreme court, composed of men of the first legal talents. I noticed this juridical solecism to a respectable clergyman of that state, but he maintained its propriety, for, he observed, “the great object of a “government is, undoubtedly, to render “justice to its citizens; but it is also an “object of the next importance to render “it in such manner as it shall meet the “comprehension of the great body of the “people. Our supreme court (he added) “do the first, and I assure you it greatly “aids the latter to have the opinions of “our most eminent lawyers revised, re-“versed or confirmed by men of *common* “*sense.*”—But the case of the Connecticut judiciary is not (as the lawyers say) *in point*, for it might, perhaps, be thought derogatory to the noble and high court of errors in England, to compare them to men of mere *common sense*. Whilst
“We laugh where we must, let us be candid
“where we can.”

Although a man born a judge, simply considered, is as ridiculous as a man born a watchmaker, yet, to place the British house of lords, considered in their judicial capacity, in the fairest light, we should rather compare them to a cast, or family, devoted for ages, by the laws and constitution, to the fabrication of watches. It is obvious, although such a family, or cast, may contain many members who would be bungling workmen, and even idiots who could not count the hours, yet, in the main, it is probable they would conduct the business of watch-making to great advantage, as the whole tenor of their education and converse would lead to an acquaintance with that art. With this view, I sat with some impatience to hear the opinions of these hereditary judges—grounded, as I anticipated, upon the profoundest investigation, and delivered in the best style of Blackstone and Mansfield. I had therefore to exercise all my patience while the advocates were mooting the

points in the cause, in the bald style of the English reports, which our friend, Joseph D******, used to say, seemed to be literal translations of law Latin. You recollect those joyous vigils when, to enliven our wine and cigars, we used to call upon our friend to give us a dissertation upon the classical elegancies of the Term Reports, which he would illustrate by apt quotations from Bracton, Fleta, and the elder English jurists—or those enchanting strictures of my Lord Coke upon the statute *de donis conditionalibus*, the beauties of which, he declared, were always flotsam, jetsam, and ligān in his memory, and which, he gaily asserted, in neatness and force of expression, could only be surpassed by that memorable and delectable definition of a man-milliner, given by a modern English lawyer of refined taste.

“ A man-milliner, is a person exercising
“ the art, trade, occupation, business, la-
“ bour, work, and mystery of a milliner—
“ BEING A MAN.”

One of the advocates was very profound and very dull ; indeed, he was so tedious that a young Scotch lawyer, near me, expressed some very unequivocal signs of impatience—but a companion checked him with “ hoot mon, when a mon speaks “ in character ye should na’ withhold “ praise : do na’ ye ken the mon is an “ advocate of the English sessions ?”

The counsel for the defendant replied : but if the argument of the first was infused with poppy, that of his learned brother was saturated with opium. If the first was Somnus, the second was father Nox himself ;—eldest night—ere Satan, that Brindsley of Milton, had canalled chaos, and built a bridge and rail-way o'er the “ wide abyss,” for the transportation of original sin into paradise.—Pardon the magnificence of my metaphor, my excellent friend ; remember I am in training for the honours of a blue-stocking club—and when I sometimes adopt the gorgeous metaphor or quaint epithet, consider them

as specimens of my progress in the elegant art of modern English fashionable fine writing.—By the aid of the Scotch gentleman's snuff-box, I kept awake until the arguments were concluded.

The Lord Chancellor, who presided, prepared to collect the opinions of the noble judges. Now was a moment of anxious expectation. As I expected he would begin with the youngest, I felt not a little solicitous to discover how the young peers would acquit themselves on a subject abstruse in itself, and rendered more so by the eloquence of the learned counsel.—The Lord Chancellor seemed to comprehend the subject, and stated the main and collateral points with clearness and precision—and called upon the noble lords for any thing they might have to offer. One of the *law lords* (as they are styled here—that is, a lord who has acquired a knowledge of the law in the good old, vulgar, democratic way of study and practice) gave his opinion. He was

followed by several others of the same class.—The Lord Chancellor then stated the main point concisely, and said—“ my lords, is it your opinion that the judgment of the court of king’s bench be affirmed ?”—casting his eyes hastily, and cursorily, and I fancied rather contemptuously, over the hereditary judges—and, without waiting, or, indeed, having any time, to estimate the votes, said “ it is affirmed.” His lordship then gave his own opinion *seriatim*, and adduced several arguments in favour of the defendant in error, of greater weight, I thought, than any which had been advanced by the counsel—and, finally, supported the judgment of the court of king’s bench, and the present opinion of the house, handsomely. Now, I thought this very considerate in his lordship ; as he appeared, manifestly, to have formed and pronounced the judgment of the house for them, it was certainly very kind in his lordship to show

the noble lords that there might be something very handsome said in favour of it.

After all the wisdom and parade of this high court of errors—if this great nation, so justly proud of its unrivalled judiciary, as they have now a court of conscience, (which, by the by, has jurisdiction only of *trifling matters*, and is not a court of *record* in *England*,) would only copy humble Connecticut, and substitute for their high court of errors a court of *common sense*, it would greatly improve the system—and the judgment, in this case, would have been reversed with the approbation, at least, of all those who have a common share of it: for the cause turned solely upon a point of ancient practice. It was agreed, on all sides, that the merits of the original suit was with the losing party, and the decision, by the house of lords, operated as an extreme hard case. But the old maxim of the English law, *fiat justitia ruat cœlum*, is now understood to mean—let prece-

dents govern if justice is trampled upon. This adherence to the *technic* of forms and practice is of great importance in English jurisprudence. The people are taught to pride themselves in their judicial system, and they verily believe that the science of the law is better understood, and justice more impartially administered, in the English courts, than in those of any other nation. But the English law is a science so transcendantly mysterious, that nine-tenths of the people cannot comprehend it; and when they, at times, discover the folly and wickedness of other departments in government, they console themselves with the inflexible impartiality of their judiciary.

The first natural impression of justice is its inflexibility. It is ever uniform, and knows no "variableness or shadow of "turning." Therefore, by a scrupulous adherence to ancient forms, however absurd, or however injurious to individuals, the people are persuaded of the steady

course and inflexible administration of justice. Although the essential doctrines of the English common law have, in modern days, been as mutable as the fashions in Bond-street—although Lord Mansfield, during his presidency in the court of king's bench, effected as great a revolution in their municipal code as ever Mirabeau contemplated in the French constitution—yet, as he scrupulously preserved the forms, it excited no alarm. This great law reformer seemed to have learned wisdom from the unsuccessful attempt of the czar Peter to deprive his clergy of their beards. Lord Mansfield saw that the sword of despotism, which could cut in sunder the doctrines and revenues of the Greek church, was blunted in its edge by the formal beards of the clergy; and while he perverted the spirit, he forbore to meddle with the ancient and venerable habiliments of the law. And there can be no doubt that the foundations of the great system of English common law

may be broken up, and, in pursuance of the principles of Mansfield, the rights and interests of the landholders may be made subservient to the gains of the merchant, and the rights, interests, and liberties of the common people sacrificed to both—yet, while its forms continue, while the dignified costume of the judges shall be preserved—while the rust of Norman and Saxon *technæ* remain, and the ancient formal practice of the courts abide, the people will be content to worship the venerable body—while the spirit of the common law, of that common law which was the birth-right, the glory, and the sure defence of the liberties of their ancestors, is fled to mingle with the departed spirits of those more enlightened Englishmen who transmitted it, as their richest legacy, to their posterity : let us, my friend, endeavour to guard against the delusions of forms, and look to the essence of that rational liberty for which our fathers successfully fought.



LETTER XL.

English Biography.

LONDON.

My excellent Friend,

AMONG the innumerable works issuing daily from the English press, there are none more frequent than those devoted to biography. Indeed, there is no book more pleasing than memoirs of eminent persons, written judiciously. The stately pen of the historian, whose object is event, cannot condescend to gratify curiosity with personal notices. In reciting the eventful battle, the generals may be named; in recording the treaty, the statesman may be noticed ; but we learn no more of them than is necessarily connected with those

events. The perusal of history leaves on the mind of every reflecting reader, a curiosity to know more of those great men, of whom the mirror of the historian has afforded but a glimpse. We wish to be informed whether heroes or statesmen derived their bravery or wisdom from a long line of illustrious ancestors, or achieved greatness by inherent worth. To gratify this laudable curiosity was, undoubtedly, the origin of biography ; and it must be acknowledged that the lives of the good and the great, written with judgment, often illustrate history, and present the most instructive lessons to mankind. Plutarch is, at once, the model for biographers, and his lives the mirror in which the folly and deformity of modern English biography may be seen : I do not think I read any modern works with such abhorrence, disgust, and ineffable contempt. I am an enthusiast in legitimate biography. You know, my dear Frank, that if my little library can boast of any thing like a

complete collection, it is in the biographical department—to which I have frequently repaired for profit and delight. Indeed, what can be more profitable and delightful than to turn the pages of correct biography; to trace genius from its birth; to see the Herculean mind strangling, as it were, the snakes of ignorance in the cradle; to observe its inherent energies bursting the dense mists of poverty and obscurity; to view the man of mighty genius leaping into the angry flood of life, like Cassius into the “troubled “Tyber,”

“buffeting its surge
 “With lusty sinews; throwing it aside
 “And stemming it with heart of controversy,
 “Until he gains the point proposed.”

When the master-spirit, in despite of poverty, obscurity, municipal restraint, and the shackles of ancient custom,

“Gets the start of the majestic world,
 “And bears the palm alone,”

and leaves the epoch of his existence to denote and glorify the age and country which gave him birth, we read and are inspired with noble ambition ; our mental powers are awakened. If we possess a latent spark of genius, it is kindled to a flame. We learn to buffet misfortune, surmount despondency, and dare to be eminent. But this is no representation or effect of English biography. The object of their biographers is not to excite emulation in great, but to fill the vacuity of little minds ; not to exhibit their heroes, statesmen, and literati, with dignity to the present, or transmit their characters with splendour to future ages—but, by minute, frivolous, ludicrous, and often indecorous anecdote, to belittle them in the view of their cotemporaries ; and to convince posterity that the praise bestowed on them by historians, or acquired by their works, is totally unfounded. The English connoisseur in painting will tell you that the portrait of a great man cannot

be perfect until its tints are mellowed by time : but the English have yet to learn, that the same will equally apply, in a metaphorical sense, to the original. To render a great character perfect, they should suffer time to mellow its tints, and cast a friendly and oblivious shade over those glaring colours which degraded it in the eyes of cotemporaries. But the present English biographers do not write for posterity : No—they write for circulating-libraries, reading-rooms, ornamented studies, loungers, pastry-cooks, and green-grocers.

I adore Plutarch, who made me acquainted with the worthies of Greece and Rome : I honour the anonymous author who made me acquainted with the great Galileo : I am inspired with enthusiasm while I read. “ I live along his lines”—I give the reins to my imagination—I am present with the great mathematician when he first points his newly invented telescope toward the heavens, and establishes, by

observation, the Copernican system—I see the sun of his genius now bursting through the dense clouds of monkish ignorance, then obscured by those of ecclesiastical bigotry; and, finally, pouring its strong light through after-ages, which shall not be extinguished until the system he illustrated shall be dissolved.

I am grateful to the man who wrote the life of the modest Harvey, who gave consistency to the art of physic by the discovery of the circulation of the blood. The obstacles he encountered from ignorance and envy, which discredited his discovery, despoiled him of his manuscripts and his household goods, and attempted to rob him of his fame, and which he requited by bequeathing his patrimony for the benefit of the art—afford a lesson which may be useful even in my small sphere.—Dr. Burnet's account of the life and death of John, Earl of Rochester, presents a more powerful antidote to vicious pleasures than the choice of Her-

cules. In his relation of the death-bed repentance of this eminent martyr to debauchery, every sentence is a homily which speaks consolation to the pious and bids the infidel prepare for future judgment.—In the lives of Galileo, Harvey, and others from the same school, I see much to admire and to emulate, and nothing to excite ridicule or disgust; I am grateful to such biographers. But I do not thank the author who pursues his hero into the recesses of domestic life, and exhibits the disgusting infirmities of our common nature. I owe no obligations to the biographers who exhibit to me the Duke of Marlborough “saving a groat”—Addison and Parnel in their cups—Dean Swift lampooning good Mrs. Sheridan, at Quilca—or the moral Dr. Johnson belabouring Osborn, the printer, with a folio. Such puny anecdotes make no part of legitimate biography. It is trifling with the reader of reflection, and worse than trifling with the subject of their

memoirs. The Duke de Rochefoucauld observes, that no man was ever a hero in the eyes of his valet-de-chambre—and one would imagine that the lives of most of the eminent men in England were written by their valets, or rather by their grooms or scullions.—I have just been disgusted by reading a few pages of a work which the author has had the effrontery to style biographical : but it is not biography ; it is the mischievous scandal of waiting-maids—the buzz of a village bar-room—and the gossip's tale at a vulgar accouchement.

It is difficult to decide whether most injury is done, by these pretended biographers, to their readers or to the reputation of the subject of their memoirs. When we peruse an ethical work—for instance, should we read lessons of sublime morality in the Rambler—should we be convinced, by his wondrous force of language, of the necessity of self-denial, temperance, and the control of inordinate

passions, we should be immediately impressed with an idea that the author lived an eminent example of the precepts he enjoined ; and, even should we be deceived, it is for our own benefit we should continue to think so : but when we are told, by his biographer, that this austere moralist was a glutton, and a wine-bibber, that his ungoverned passions, at times, precipitated him into broils and striking, and even into an association with the lowest grades of sexual pollution, the charm is dissolved, the writer is devested of half his moral persuasion. If you doubt this position, my friend, look into yourself : you may have been pleased, it is true, with an elegant ethical essay, written by a known profligate, but you never had your heart warmed or your life amended by a sermon on temperance from a drunken parson. It is true in writing as in preaching, that the sentiment which reaches the heart must be supposed to come from the heart. In this view, therefore,

many of the modern biographies may be considered, not merely trifling but pernicious—not only disreputable to the subjects of them but injurious to the cause of virtue. Mr. Boswell, one of the most fashionable of these anti-biographers, apologizes for the insertion of several anecdotes, very discreditable to Dr. Johnson, by the moral obligation of a strict adherence to truth; but he should have reflected that the truth is not violated by the omission of facts immaterial to the great object of relation. Were a man called to testify to a contract in a court of justice he would not be guilty of perjury should he omit to relate that one of the contracting parties, on his way to the court, had fallen into a jakes: but if this regard to truth must, without limitation, govern the biographer, why did he not inform us, at least in a marginal note, how many times in a year his illustrious friend performed his non-naturals.

You who have often rallied me upon what you was pleased to call the sickly delicacy of my taste in belles-lettres, will readily conceive the disgust I am exposed to by perusing several recent biographical works which you will receive by Captain ——. The truth is, when I inquire after some great man whose fame has crossed the Atlantic, I am immediately referred to an elegant edition of his life—and, in reading it, feel the same disappointment as if I should employ Mr. West to paint a full-length portrait of William the third, expecting he would represent that hero mounted on his proud charger, contending for kingdoms at the battle of Boyne, and he should (in the spirit of an English biographer) represent the glorious protestant deliverer perch'd in his water-closet, writhing in all the contortions of a dry belly-ache ! Oh, it is vile ! it is descending from the dignity of the biographer, to expose the infirmities of the wise for the gratification of the idle ; to patch the

venerable garb of wisdom with the motley of Harlequin, and hold it forth as a laughing-stock for folly. When the public taste can relish such biography it presents a sure but melancholy proof of the decadence of learning in any country.—Although he cannot boast of originality, Dr. Johnson set the fashion of this gossiping biography. In his lives of the British poets, he was sedulous to collect those little ana which make weak readers laugh and wise men grieve. From him we learn that Addison tippled, and his wife was a termagant ; that Prior affected sordid converse in base company, and that his Chloe was a despicable drab ; that Pope was a glutton, and fell a sacrifice to a silver sauce-pan, in which it was his delight to heat potted lampries ; and that Rag Smith was a sloven. When I first read Johnson's Lives of the British Poets I regretted those littlenesses, but when I read his life of the immortal Milton, the latchet of whose shoes (with reverence be it spoken)

he was not worthy to unloose, I then hoped I should live to see the day when some biographer of his own school might write this author's life, and mete out to him the measure he meted unto others. I have lived to be fully gratified—I have read the life of Samuel Johnson, L. L. D. by Mrs. Hester Thrale, Sir John Hawkins, and James Boswell, Esq. and, to my infinite satisfaction, these three have raised a tripod of incense to his fame, from which any man of decent regard to his reputation would be happy to fly for sanctuary to the pillory.

Such an abhorrence of these, and similar biographers, has been excited in those who apprehended they might be damned by them to everlasting fame, that, to rescue their memories from obloquy, and their friends and relations from shame and sorrow, several eminent literary men have been compelled to publish their own memoirs. Among these, Richard Cumberland, grandson of the great Bentley, and

the first dramatist in England, has lately published an account of his own life and writings, and I am told, by one of his friends, he means, by adding supplement to supplement, to preclude the possibility of his memory's being lacerated by these biographical hyænas. That he published his own memoirs from such motives is apparent from one of his concluding sentences:—"Man has no need, no right, no interest, to know of man more than I have enabled every one to know of me." David Hume, near thirty years before, wrote his own life; which should be esteemed, by the English, *in mode*, a model for biographers; for he has disclosed all those incidents which the world has any *need, right, or interest* to know.

Besides those memoirs which issue proudly from the press, in appropriate volumes, there are a variety of voluminous biographical collections, alphabetically arranged, which are filled with *celebrated names*, known only to the collectors: and,

in addition to this, the magazines lend their aid to perpetuate memory; and here, with wonderful industry, the darkest recesses of obscurity are ransacked to find names and anecdotes to fill their columns. It is curious to observe what ingenuity is displayed to eke out the memoirs, and give celebrity to a man whose life might be abundantly comprised in the biography of a village tombstone. One of these Lilliputian biographies I will extract, for your amusement, from the Gentleman's Magazine—it will serve as a specimen.

“*August.—Died, at Wragby, on the
23d ult. Mr. Jacob Bonnycastle, aged
64.—N. B. Some notice of this eminent
person in our next.*”

“*September.—Mr. Jacob Bonnycastle,
whose death we announced in our last,
was the son of Mr. Isaac Bonnycastle,
and grandson to the justly celebrated
Mr. Abraham Bonnycastle, who, in
1742, was the first person who dis-
covered the approach of Lord Anson's*

“ ship, the Centurion, after her voyage
 “ round the world. The late Mr. Jacob
 “ Bonnycastle was forty years usher to
 “ an academy—and was remarkable for
 “ having never used but one pen during
 “ this period, which was made of a gray
 “ goose-quill. It is said, in his youth, he
 “ actually conversed with a gentleman
 “ who was familiarly acquainted with the
 “ celebrated Bamfylde Moore Carew,
 “ king of the beggars.”

Now, one would suppose sufficient had been said to emblazon the memory of the “mighty dead”—not so : in the next number we find further notices of the “celebrated Mr. Jacob Bonnycastle, in “a letter from ‘a schoolfellow’ to the “editors of the Gentleman’s Magazine.

“ Sir,

“ The ample justice you have rendered
 “ the memory of my learned and illustrious friend, Mr. Jacob Bonnycastle, of
 “ Wragby, has emboldened me to correct

“ a few inadvertent errors in your statement, *for the benefit of posterity*. The pen which Mr. Bonnycastle so long used, “ to his own honour and that of the nation, was not deplumed from a gray goose, but once adorned the pinions of a crow. Mr. Bonnycastle was not the son of Isaac Bonnycastle, but of the late Andrew Bonnycastle, who was executed for sheep-stealing. His uncle was the noted Edward Bonnycastle, commonly called *lying Ned*. His mother was a noted beauty, in her youth, and was kept by the famous blackleg, Colonel Kelly. His maternal grandmother was the celebrated *Moll Huggins*, well known in the metropolis, about the year 1737, by the name of wapping Moll.—You may rely on these facts, as I have been intimately acquainted with this *worthy* family near half a century.

“ A Schoolfellow.”

“ P. S.—It is not true, as stated in the Monthly Magazine, that the late Mr.

“ Bonnycastle was convicted of sheep-
 “ stealing, with his father, for the prose-
 “ cution was dropt on account of his
 “ extreme youth, he being then but 22
 “ years of age.”

Marginal note, by the editors of the Gentleman's Magazine.

“ We think we discover in ‘ a school-
 “ ‘ fellow,’ an old and valued corres-
 “ pondent : we hope to be favoured with
 “ further communications from his in-
 “ valuable pen. It is researches like these
 “ which add to the solid stock of English
 “ literature, and will enable us to preserve,
 “ in the eyes of foreigners, that proud pre-
 “ eminence to which we are so justly en-
 “ titled, as the first nation in arts, arms,
 “ and letters.”

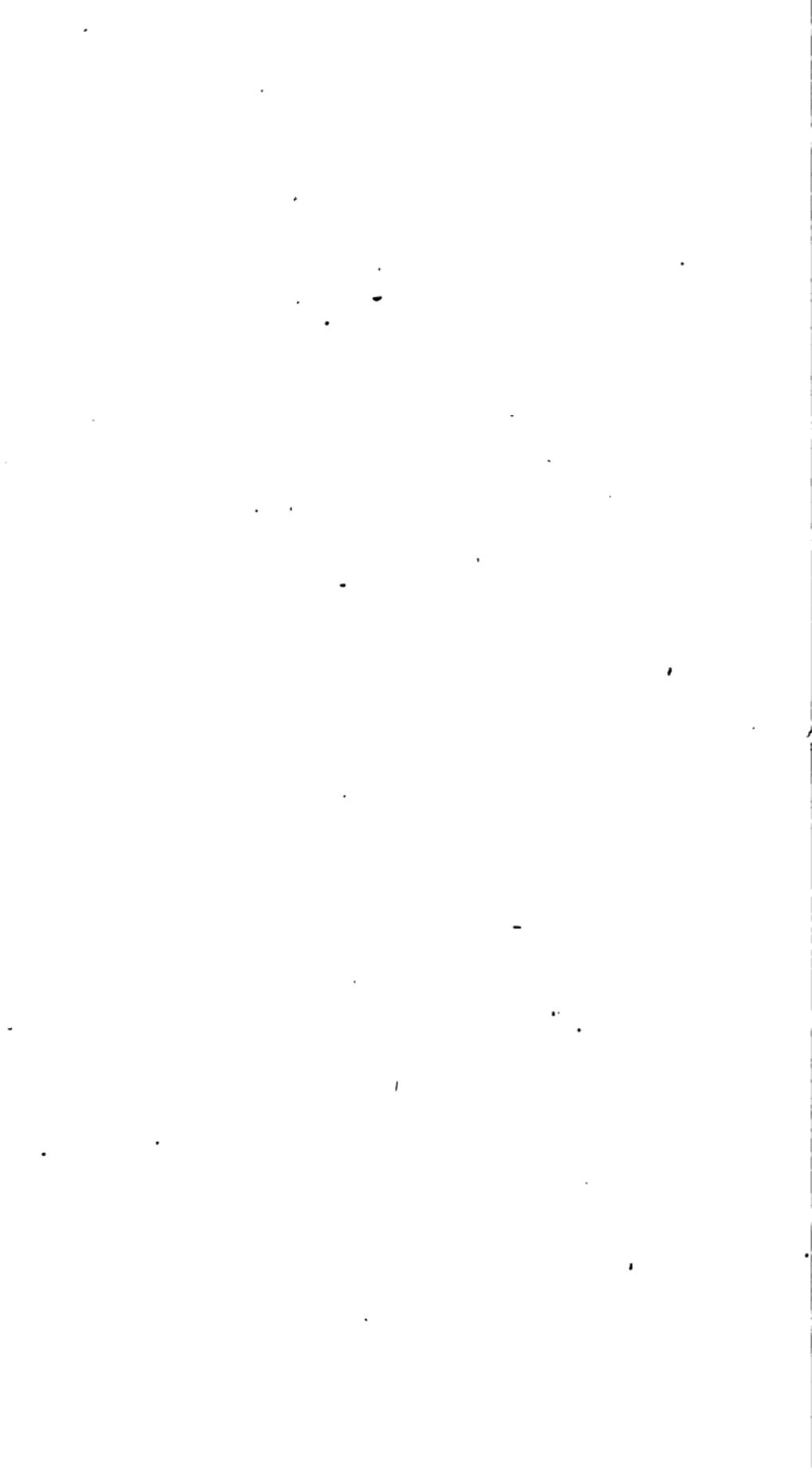
Now, my dear Frank, how edifying must all this be to the learned ; and what rich consolation to the family of the deceased.—As I write from memory, I will not say that the above extracts are correctly made, but, you may be assured, you

will find the substance of them in the obituaries of the English magazines.—But there is a species of biography still more reprehensible than those which I have noticed. I allude to the lives of celebrated prostitutes, published generally under the specious title of “*APOLOGIES*,” in which these lewd women display their illicit amours with matchless effrontery, and confirm the maxim, that when their sex have abandoned their chastity they are capable of greater daring than ours. The notorious Constantia Philips may be considered as the mistress of this school, but her more modern disciples have so far exceeded her in fascination of style, vividness of description, and bold exposure of meretricious intrigue, that her infamous memoirs may be considered, in a comparative view, as an ethical work written expressly for the promotion of virtue. The avidity with which these base and seductive works are purchased and read by what are called modest women, in England,

is a gross evidence of the corruption of national taste and morals. The English writers on the rise and fall of the Roman empire, with great propriety, point to the corruption of female manners as one of the certain indicia of its decline. I can see but little difference, in point of delicacy, between the English lady who reads openly these polluted memoirs, and the Roman matron who exposed herself unrobed on the Arena.

If the British parliament were as vigilant to regulate morals as commerce, they would long ere this have interdicted such publications by fine or imprisonment. And the prosecution and punishment of a printer of one of these apologies for pollution, would have adorned the national annals much more than the prosecution of some wretched pamphleteer against the ministry, whose offence, in the next administration, may be considered a virtue—for the support of any administration will at best procure an

equivocal, temporary, and partial approbation; but to support morals will secure the applause of the wise and good of *all parties* in all ages. Let us, my friend, endeavour so to live that we may at all times secure the response of a good conscience;—and God preserve us from English biographers!



LETTER XIX.

*The London Booksellers—Etymology of
the term Yankey.*

LONDON.

My excellent Friend,

THE booksellers' shops, with some exceptions, are not so splendid and spacious as I expected. An old celebrated stand, for any kind of business, is sought after with avidity, and rents high in proportion to these advantages. Thus, spaciousness and splendour are sacrificed to profit. The books are, however, handsomely arranged, and seats provided for customers, which are, perhaps, too often occupied by the literary lounger, to the annoyance of the trade. The shelves dis-

play specimens of works most in repute, whilst the main stock is preserved in chambers and warehouses.

The booksellers in London are the real patrons of the learned : not that they reward merit like Pollio and Mecænas—they do not give villas at Tusculum, nor preserve the poets' native fields from the devastation of the soldiery—but they foster the young author by displaying his works, beautified with all the elegances of the typographical art ; and, by puffs, advertisements, and their numerous correspondence, they force a sale ; and instances have not been unfrequent when the demand for a book, which they owned by unconditional purchase of the copy-right, has been greater than was primarily expected, that they have gratuitously shared the extra profit with the author.

To a union of the London booksellers the English are indebted for many of their great and valuable works. Several of these booksellers are authors themselves,

and therefore “ touch'd with their infirmities.” Their advice is always ready, and generally correct. Those of them who are advanced in business entertain the poor children of literature at their tables. At these repasts I have acquired many amusing, and some valuable and instructive acquaintance. In their shops they are extremely civil, as, indeed, every citizen of London is, when he has any thing to sell ; when he comes to purchase, that is another affair. The Englishman always conceives that he who buys confers a favour. Soon after my arrival I went to several book-stores, and as I intimated my design to expend between two and three thousand dollars, for the purchase of a public library, I was very respectfully received. In one shop, as I found the master very generally acquainted with the belles-lettres, I chatted very volubly, and quoted the classics with my usual freedom as when among my college friends. He listened with such apparent and earnest attention, and spoke,

at times, with so much knowledge, chas-
tened with such modesty, that, finding
him pleased with me, I was charmed with
him. When I informed him that I came
from the United States he seemed sur-
prised, and confessed he had not imagined
that the infant seminaries of the new world
could have effected such an education ;
but, after a pause of recollection, he added,
“ Ah, sir, I ought to have known that
“ the country of Franklin, Adams, and
“ Jefferson, must produce scientific men.
“ Sir, you were born in a new world ;
“ every thing there evinces the vigour of
“ youth : Europe, sir, I fear, is in her
“ dotage.—You have withstood our arms,
“ and, I fear, will soon rival us in the arts
“ and sciences.”—At the word *dotage*, to
be sure, I ought to have recollected the
cosmogony of the rogue who cheated
Goldsmith’s Vicar of Wakefield, but I
was so pleased with my country’s praise,
and perhaps with *my own*, that I was ready
to expend all my purchase-money with

this lubricious bookseller; however, as my money was in trust, I resolved to be wary, and repeat my visits before I closed the bargain. Whenever I came, the business of the shop was left to the shopman, while I engrossed entirely the attention of its master. An accident happily saved me from his toils. The last time I was there, I observed a man of rather ordinary appearance, but very grave and formal in his carriage, cheapening books. He inquired for De Laune's Plea for the Non-conformists, Flavel's Token for Mourners, and Richard Baxter's Saint's Rest, and some other polemical and pious books. After asking the price, he observed, that he was grieved it was so exorbitant, as he intended to lay out about thirty pounds in books, for a dissenting society in Broomsgrove, and found most of the works he wanted there. At mention of the thirty pounds, the bookseller (who had been deeply engaged with me in illustrating a passage in an idyl of Theocritus by a

quotation from the *Noctes Atticæ* of Aulus Gellius) suddenly quitted me and advanced toward the stranger, with the same insinuating air with which he at first accosted me, and assured him that when he sold to a society, especially a religious society, it was always at a reduced price. The stranger took up a pamphlet and inquired its price. "That excellent treatise is inestimable : it was written by "the great and pious Mr. ——, (somebody, I did not distinctly hear the name,) "against occasional conformity : he left a few copies with me, with directions to "present them to the most eminent of "the dissenting clergy ;—sir, I have but "two left, one I propose sending to Dr. "Priestley, in America—will you do me "the honour to accept the other, (bowing "very low,) as I perceive you are of that "learned and exemplary denomination of "Christians." The stranger acknowledged he was—his features relaxed—and the wily bookseller secured the thirty pounds

without further haggling about the price. As I now discovered that the classical bookseller dealt largely in Sterne's "de-licious essence," of which I had taken sufficient, I retired.

I learned afterwards that this bookseller was considered, by the respectable part of the trade, as the mere Cull of his day—ever prepared to flatter, and ever ready to defraud. A friend, to whom I related this anecdote, said, "sir, did you not know he was from Yorkshire?" It seems they consider the Yorkshiremen as very subtle, if not dishonest. I was rather chagrined at this opprobrium, because, you know, Governor Endicott, with most of our English ancestors, came from that respectable county. The term Yankey is but a corruption of Yorkshire, being simply the Indian pronunciation. The natives of the country hearing the white men, during their early habitancy, frequently speaking of Yorkshire, styled them Yankeys. To be satisfied of this,

I once requested a Cognawagha Indian to pronounce Yorkshire : he immediately replied—"oh, Ya-ankah, you—you be " Ya-ankah." So that you perceive, if the Yorkshire bookseller had attempted again to flatter me into a bad bargain, I could, with great propriety, have exclaimed with Sam, in the farce of Raising the Wind, " aye, and you see I come fra " Yorkshire too."

Believe me, my friend, no blandishments will ever seduce me to forget my native country. I can parodize Horace, and exclaim, with more than poetic ardour,

O Columbia, quando te auspiciam.

LETTER XX.

Strictures upon the decorous in public bodies.

LONDON.

My excellent Friend,

YOU charge me with fastidiousness in my remarks upon the merriment of the British house of commons. Perhaps the fervour of writing, the consciousness of addressing "the friendly eye alone," and a certain lens of unequal surface, through which I am too apt to view the wise ones of this world in grotesque attitudes, may have misled me, but I never can be driven from the opinion that gravity is as natural an attendant on wisdom, and as often found in her company, as the laughing

loves beside the car of Venus, or frisking fawns in the train of Bacchus and Ariadne. It is true, the wits have often ridiculed gravity, but what is there so sacred as not to have been, at times, the butt of wit? Rochefoucauld defines gravity to be a mysterious carriage of the body, calculated to cover the defects of the mind. Laurence Sterne, without defining, boldly calls it an “arrant scoundrel,” and yet wise men in all ages have been grave men; and, if there are some exceptions, it will be acknowledged, even by the jocose, that they would have been much wiser if they had been much graver. The sportiveness of great and learned men is not reckoned among their excellences, but their weaknesses; and this is the general opinion of people either merry or wise. Among the ancients, who I confess are my standards of human perfection, we find but one laughing philosopher. I remember a print of that merry sage hung in my father’s parlour, with that of the

crying philosopher as a companion ; and my good mother used to tell me, when I was a small boy, that Mr. Heraclitus was a sensible old gentleman, always weeping at observing what a fool the other was to be always laughing. I know there have been authors of even learned works who have been facetious men—but this resulted from their wit, not their wisdom, and wits are the cicada of literature, who chirp away the summer and starve in the winter of life. But modern or ancient times have not produced any great writers, statesmen, or heroes, who have been noted for jocularity. I do not recollect but one pun in all Cicero's works, and not one tolerable joke in Cæsar's Commentaries. Cardinal Richelieu, although he attempted, could never be facetious. The great Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene were never considered as merry blades : and, in our country, Washington and Adams were no jokers. I do not contend that a wise man may not be face-

tious, or even merry, but no wise man was ever facetious or merry on great and solemn occasions. It is true, Ludlow, in his memoirs, informs us that Oliver Cromwell and his officers smuttred each other with coals, and played barrack tricks at the horse-guards, the night before the execution of Charles the First—but remember there were no repartees, jokes, and Joe Miller jests, in the high commission court: no—there all was solemn;—if the thing done was wrong, the manner of doing it was august. If that unfortunate monarch had had to contend with such men as are now found in the British house of commons—if Pym and Haslerig had betted on Sweeper and Sky-Scraper, and Hampden laughed and joked, and drolled about ship-money, and the members had tittered at his ribaldry, English liberty had now been a mere name, and British greatness unknown.

I do not believe there was ever convened a more dignified body of men than

that which composed the American Congress who promulgated the declaration of our independence. The hall of congress was not then a club-room of merry fellows, but a cabinet for the consultation of wise men : the members did not joke, but consulted—they did not laugh, but *acted*: and under the conduct of such wise, and let me add *grave*, men, from dependent colonies we became an independent nation. And, however great men may indulge in sportive sallies of social mirth, I still insist it is indecorous on great occasions ; and whenever I see a great national council, engaged on momentous concerns, as merry as grigs, I shall adopt the language of the wise and grave Jewish preacher, and say “ of laughter, it is mad; “ and of mirth, what doeth it ? ”—I had read the English relations of the frivolity of the French national assembly—I thought the reprehension of their travellers just, and their epithet of “ French monkeys” well applied ; but let me no more see

Englishmen sneer at French frivolity, since I have seen the British house of commons as merry as gossips at a juketing.

That a certain decorum, and even *gravity* of deportment, is proper, and meets the sense of all who are decorous themselves, is one of those truisms which need merely to be stated to be universally acceded to ; and that the reverse will, at all times, be odious to those who are unaccustomed to it, is equally true.

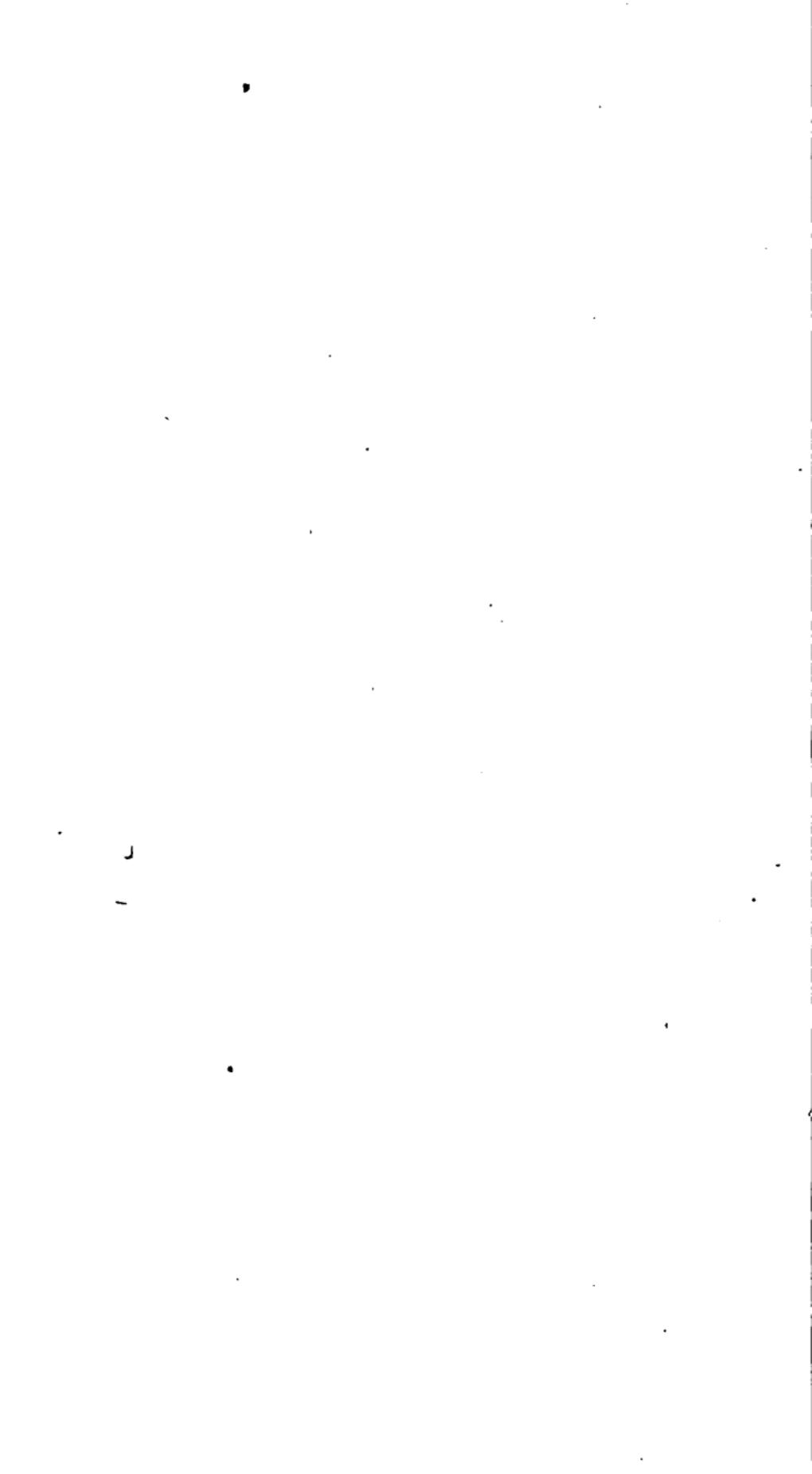
Lord Chesterfield charges his son (then minister plenipotentiary at Madrid) to be at all times scrupulously attentive to his personal demeanour : many persons, he observes, will visit you from motives of curiosity, and when they are interrogated “ what was his excellency the English “ ambassador doing ? ” let them not reply, “ his excellency the ambassador “ was picking his nose.”—In France, or Germany, I may be asked, “ did you visit “ that august assembly, the British house

“ of commons ?” “ Yes ; I was in the
 “ gallery on a most important occasion—
 “ the state of the nation, which involved
 “ the state of Europe, was the order of the
 “ day.” “ Ah, my good sir, you interest
 “ me deeply ; pray, what was done by
 “ those great men ?” “ Oh, sir—a more
 “ pleasant, facetious, jolly, comical, set of
 “ fellows you never saw, than these same
 “ British senators : they quirped, they
 “ cranked, and they joked until the
 “ spectators and their clerks were almost
 “ suffocated with fun—and I verily thought
 “ the speaker would have burst his sides
 “ with laughter.”

Let any candid Englishman be requested to consider what would have been his feeling at such a recital, and he may have some idea of mine, who am the descendant of an Englishman.

Whether *we* are merry or grave, my friend, let us endeavour to be *wise*—wise for time, and wise for *eternity*.

Your old friend, &c.



LETTER XXIII.

The sun—and fashion.

LONDON.

My dear Sister,

YOUR first charge, at parting, was that I should, by every ship, give you an account of my health—your last, “to send “you a particular detail of the *fashions*.” As to the first, I can obey it I trust to mutual satisfaction: my cough abates, and I gather strength daily. Could I but enjoy twelve hours such clear sunshine as you have in Brooklyne, I should feel “my “youthful joy and bound of health.” But, alas ! in this desponding clime the sun is generally obscured by dense clouds,

or if a day should intervene which they here call fine, the best we can expect is to catch a transient glimpse of this invigorating luminary, through turrets, steeples, and chimneys, where it looks as cheerless and forlorn as a poor debtor peeping through the grates of his prison ; even in its meridian altitude it is obscured by clouds of sea-coal smoke, continually arising from household or manufacturing fires in this vast city, and appears, like Milton's fallen angels, "with looks down-
" cast and dampt." As I pass the streets I cast my eyes upwards, and can scarcely forbear exclaiming, with the wayward Hamlet, "this most excellent canopy, the
" air—look you—this brave o'erhanging
" firmament, this majestic roof fretted
" with golden fire—why, it appears no
" other thing to me than a foul and pesti-
" lent congregation of vapours." I as-
sure you I often recollect poor O'Calla-
ghan's exclamation, which we in our child-
hood used to laugh at and ridicule as a

bull—"Och ! I wish you could see now
 "what a brave sun we have in Drogheda." When I hear a London cit praise a day as fine which would be condemned with us as gloomy, I feel there is no blunder in the conception of a local sun, and am ready to exclaim to this beclouded race, "Ah, I wish you could see what a brave sun we have in Boston;"—I yearn to be again basking in its beams : methinks if I could once again inhale the mild breeze of our early autumn, under the vivifying expanse of a clear blue sky, I should lapse from my faith, and "pay my worship to the gairish sun."

Nothing is more difficult, and no one less qualified than myself to give you an account of the fashions ; but no task is so hard, which I would not attempt to please my sister : Were I qualified, the ever varying whims and caprice of this inconstant goddess would prevent a cor-

rect detail. I often think of Pope's direction to portray the volatile fair :

—“Take a firm cloud, and in it
Catch, ere she change, the Cynthia of the minute.”

Should I accurately describe a bonnet, ere this could reach you, and Mrs. Crufts make it, its place here would probably be usurped by a hat, and your fashionable bonnet consigned to the servant-maid.

The English should not, however, be rashly charged with volatility in their frequent changes of the mode. The change of fashion, which with us is a whim, here is a principle : thousands get their bread by making ornamental dresses, and thousands would starve if they waited (as in the days of our grandmama) until the substantial brocade, the durable damask, or firm watered tabbies, whose fashion was as durable as their textures, were decayed. Even the august and venerable parliament, to revive decaying manufactures and give bread to their artificers,

have condescended to intermeddle with the fashions, and protruded their legislative power into the regions of taste. Buttons of a certain construction have been prohibited, under a penalty, and shoe-tyes interdicted by statute. You remember Pope's dying beauty:

“ Odious, in woollen, 'twould a saint provoke,”
 Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke.
 “ No! let a charming chintz and Brussels' lace
 “ Enfold these limbs and shade this lifeless face :
 “ One need not, sure, be ugly though one's dead;
 “ And, Betty—give these cheeks a little red.”

The lady alludes to the law for burying the dead in flannel. The rich, however, since that day, seem influenced by the same dreadful apprehensions of lethal deformity, and contrive to evade this homely shroud by sometimes lining the coffin, or stuffing a silken pillow for the corpse, with the statute quantity of flannel.

The English are not so much indebted to the French as formerly, for their

fashions. Some years since, the milliners and mantua-makers received, regularly, *dressed dolls* from Paris—if they do now, it is not openly avowed. Indeed, the epithet *dressed* would not at present apply to the fashionable *dames du Paris*; they would, perhaps, be better represented by *undressed dolls*. You recollect the account which Addison gives, in his playful manner, in the Spectator, of a romping club; how they demolished a prude over-night, and sent a coach the next morning to carry off the spoils. Whether such a character as a prude exists now, in the world of London fashion, I cannot say—I ought to observe, to the honour of the English fair, that I have met with no lady who appeared, in the least degree, to possess the austere qualities of that forbidding character: but if a fashionable prude should be now found and demolished, not only her spoils but the attire of the whole club might be carried in an old-fashioned tent-stitched pocket-book.

So far as I can dive into this mysterious science, the actresses, the kept mistresses, and certain dashing belles in high life, sport the present fashions—except on certain occasions. When it becomes necessary to revive a decayed mode, for the benefit of the manufacturers, the buckle-maker, or other machinist to some one of the royal family, presents his or her royal highness with the old fashion, new-vamped, and its display at a birth-night ball, seldom fails to give it currency.

When a fashion takes, it is adopted by the families of the nobility and gentry, and from them passes, in regular gradation, to the lower classes, and from them to the colonies and the United States, while those who are first in the fashion carry it to an extreme, to maintain a proud distinction. The object of the English *elegantes*, indeed, seems not to be to adorn themselves becomingly, but to avoid as much as possible, looking like beauties of meaner rank, or inferior wealth. The

present female fashions seem ill-adapted to this climate, for although a profusion of furs are worn in the winter, they are thrown by in the house, and then their drapery would scarce serve for a mosquito net ; and even this slender texture is made to fold, or rather fall around them, in imitation of what the statuaries call wet-drapery, which, as you have no statues toadmire or ladies dressed like statues to copy, I will endeavour to elucidate : Next washing-day, if you will quit your piano-forte and follow Betty into the clothes'-yard, and direct her to cover one of the old red posts with muslin dripping from the wash-tub, you will have a distinct idea of wet drapery, and, if you have the eye of a connoisseur, will certainly notice that, although the post is completely enveloped, yet, none of the beauties of its fine form are lost.

The English, after having long ridiculed the French for their winter and summer dresses, which were regularly

changed by the calendar, without regard to the advancement or retrograde of the seasons, now, in lieu of investing their wives and daughters in the comfortable, modest, and therefore graceful and attractive attire of their ancestors, admirably adapted to their moist climate, search all climes for modes of dress, and adopt them indiscriminately as the ships arrive or the whim takes, without regard to their climate or the seasons.

They have not only imported fashions from the polished cities of the continent, but, with the fastidiousness of a sickly taste, they have sought the abodes of labour and poverty for novelty, and condescended to imitate the coarse habiliments of the vicious and the vagrant. Cottage-bonnets and gipsy-hats are no longer solely appropriated to thatched houses, hedges, and by-lanes, but are transferred to the toilets of the elegant and the opulent.—If you was to view an old landscape, which the painter had enlivened by rustic

occupation, and was told it was painted in the present times, you would imagine the artist had grossly erred in the costume of his labourers—that he had portrayed city belles raking hay, and a lady of the court turning her spinning-wheel. Turning over some old magazines, I assure you I at first mistook the print of *Moll Squires*, the old gipsey, for an English dutchess, dressed for a promenade.

Fashion, this mighty conqueror of decorum, modesty, beauty, and health, like the mighty conquerors of ancient days, having laid the poor and miserable of her own country under contribution, and enriched herself with the spoils of civilized nations, now stoops to plunder the barbarian. Modes of dress are plundered from Tartary, from Kamschatka,

“From Nova-Zembla, and the Lord knows where;”

and I have strong expectations of seeing the nose-jewels, the wampum, and other ornaments of our Wabash and Creek In-

dian belles, adopted by the English beauties. They once imitated the Cherokee cut of the hair; and their vermillion, under a more fashionable name, is now the accompaniment of their toilets.

Indeed, I do not know where fashion will stop, unless at the fairy-shoe of the Chinese beauties—which the haughty fair of England must be content to envy, as they cannot imitate. Apropos—suppose you should take your English suitor, poor S*****, into favour, and come with him to London, as Mrs. S****—although you must not expect he will be here the man of consequence he is considered by the credulity of Boston folks, (for Fetter-lane, where his honest father retails farthing candles, is not so courtly a place as he used to represent it,) yet, if you will come adorned in all the paraphernalia of a sachem's lady, with your moccasons, wampum, medals, broaches, and nose-jewels—with your hair resplendent with bear's grease, the rim of your left ear slit and the

cartilage encased in silver—with your pipe modelled like a tomahawk, and your tobacco-pouch resplendent with the quills of the porcupine, and, above all, your superb bed-blanket tasselled with scarlet worsted, and embossed with various coloured beads—I have little doubt, although wife of a cit, you may set the fashion at court : I assure you, three-fourths of the people in London would suppose you dressed in the best fashion of an American lady ; perhaps they might be surprised that you were not *copper-coloured*—for the more cits of London verily believe there are few white people in the world but themselves. Even the learned are not exempt from the weakness of crediting that the English complexion is unrivalled, and have actually made some grotesque attempts to prove that their national cognomen is a derivative from Angel. As they hate the French most, they compare complexions with them first—and in their novels, and on the stage, represent them as meagre.

and sallow ; although they have frequent intercourse with the inhabitants of the south of France, whose complexions are not surpassed by any people, and equalled only by the Yankey youth. The English are so proud of their national complexion that when they would praise Milton (as if personal charms could add glory to this sublime poet) they seldom fail to mention that he was *eminently beautiful*—in his youth his complexion was pure red and white. To flatter this vanity, Manso, Marquis of Villa, who had been the patron of Tasso, addressed the following Latin distich to Milton, then a youth, and in Italy :

“ Ut mens *firma*, decos, *facies*, mos ; si, pietas sic :
“ Non Anglus verum Hercle Angelus ipse feres ; ”

which you can request the Rev. Dr. E*****, or the Rev. Mr. F*****, to translate for you. The wily Italian, it seems, had discovered this national weakness, and complimented the young poet’s

beauty : Milton was an Englishman, and therefore delighted with the compliment. The English, however, although not the fairest people in the world, can boast many clear and florid countenances, and some of their young ladies I have verily thought (without recurrence to the herald's office) the legitimate descendants of angels ;— don't mention this to Amelia !

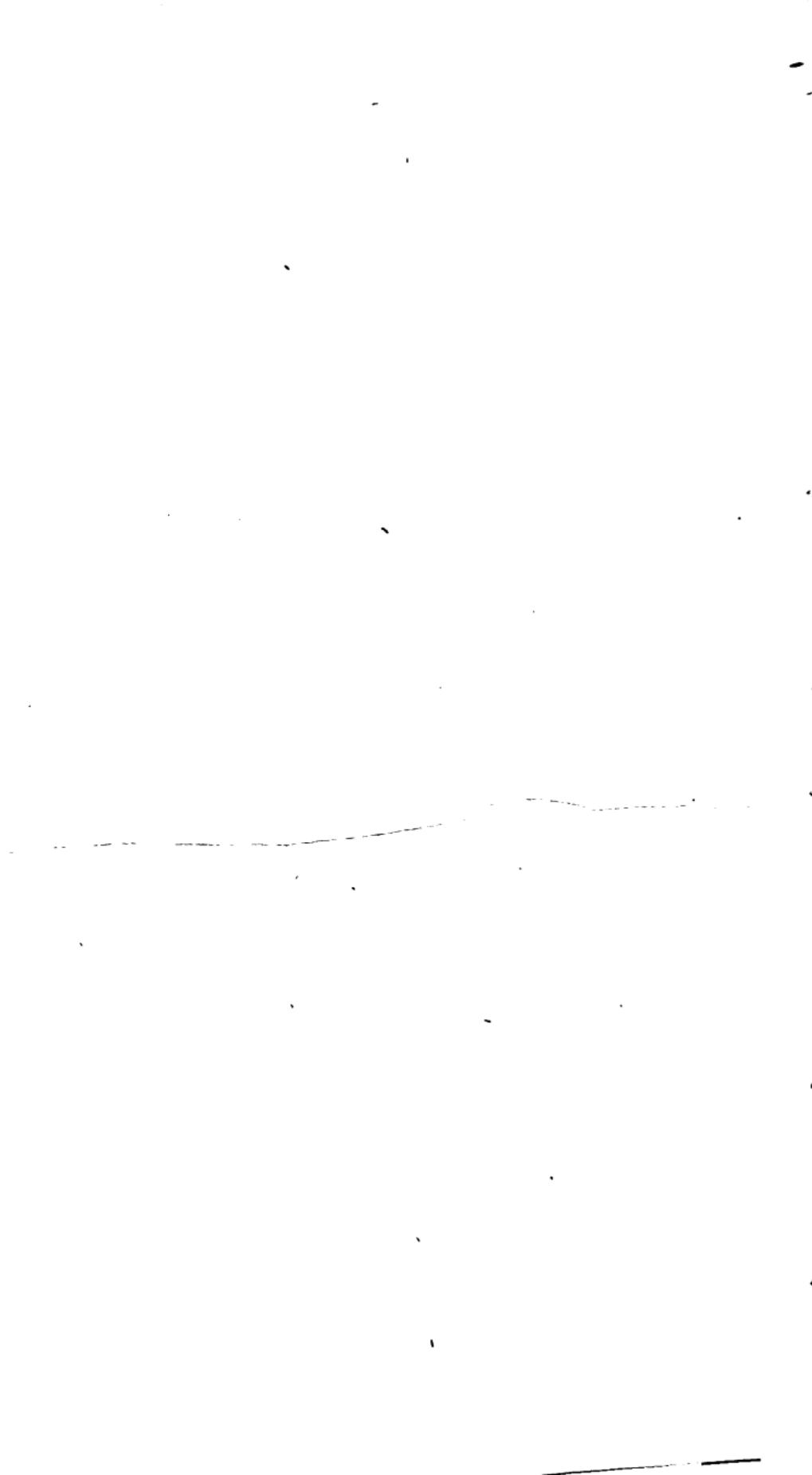
At the commencement of this long letter I sat down to describe the fashions, and I assure you, with the aid of my opera-glass, I had critically examined three ladies of the ton, to enable me to do it correctly, but I found fashion, as Burke found taste, too volatile to bear the chains of a definition ; I have therefore concluded to send you what is better than the best description—I have been to the first milliner and mantua-maker in London, (who, it is said, work for the ladies at the court end of the town,) and directed a walking and full dress suit for you, *in the tip of the mode.* A very pretty girl, the

milliner's apprentice, brought home her part this morning; she insisted I should examine them, but my reverence for the sex is such I could not gratify her: however, I caught a glimpse of a turban or cap which, as it is very gaudy, very odd, and extremely homely, I conclude must be very fashionable.

Do not, in displaying your finery, my dear sister, expose yourself to the evening air, especially after dancing; reflect on what I have suffered from similar incaution—and let me see you, on my return, as healthy as beautiful, for I know you will be as good and affectionate as ever.

Yours, affectionately.

P. S.—The band-boxes will come by the Galen, to the care of Dr. M****; you will perhaps find them at Mrs. Cruft's: the purple box must be sent to Amelia.



LETTER XXX.

*Bite—bamboozle—all the rage—quiz—
quizzical—bore—horrid bore—I owe
you one—that's a good one.*

LONDON.

My excellent Friend,

THERE are certain *scoria* floating on the English language, too light and heterogeneous to incorporate with the mass, but which appear and remain until skimmed off by the hand of fashion. These cant words, or quaint expressions, are not peculiar to the present day. They were noticed and ridiculed by Shakespear, and even foisted into the plays of Ben Jonson. Sir Richard Steele and Dr. Arbuthnot mention bite and bamboozle in their time.

The cant of later times has been exhibited in certain unmeaning words, and quaint phrases, introduced without the least regard to application or propriety, as expletives in discourse. Some years since “all the rage” was the cant, and an Englishman asserted that universal philanthropy and peace were “all the rage.” To this succeeded “quiz” and “quizzical ;” every man of common sense was a quiz, and every blockhead quizzical. To these succeeded “bore ;” every thing animate, and even inanimate, was a “bore,” a “horrid bore !” I am not certain that I give you the correct order of succession, for, indeed, I am not ambitious of correctness in the genealogy of nonsense. The cant expressions now in vogue are, “I ‘owe you one,’ ” and “that’s a good one ;” and if, in the warmth of friendly fervour, you should communicate a pathetic tale to an English friend—tell him, with tears in your eyes, of the loss of an affectionate wife, or blooming babes—of all bereaved

"at one fell swoop," you might expect to have your deadly griefs consoled with, "well, that's a good one." But, besides these evanescent vulgarisms of fashionable colloquy, there are a number of words now familiar, not merely in transient converse, but even in English fine writing, which are of vulgar origin and illegitimate descent, which disgust an admirer of the writers of their Augustan age, and degrade their finest modern compositions by a grotesque air of pert vivacity. Among these is the adjective *clever*; a word not derived from those pure and rich sources which have given all that is valuable to the English language—a word not used by any English prose writer of eminence until the reign of George the Third, nor ever introduced into a serious poem until adopted by Cowper—a word which, if we may judge of adjectives as we do of men, by their associates, shows the baseness of its origin by the company it keeps, being generally coupled with *fellow*, a term I conceive of

no respect except in courts and colleges. Englishmen, from the peer to the peasant, cannot converse ten minutes without introducing this pert adjunct. The English do not, however, use it in the same sense we do in New-England, where we apply it to personal grace, and call a trim, well-built young man, clever—which signification is sanctioned by Bailey's and the elder English Dictionaries ; nor do they use it in our secondary sense, when applying it to the qualities of the mind ; *we* intend by it *good-humoured*, *they* use it to signify skilful, adroit ; and the man who breaks a dwelling-house, a prison, or a neck adroitly, is *clever*. I heard a reverend prebend, in company with several clergymen of the episcopal church, (after having magnified the genius of the prelate,) pronounce the Archbishop of Canterbury a very *clever fellow*. A native of England may be distinguished as readily by the frequent use of the adjective *clever* as the native of New-England by that of

the verb *guess*. It was not until I had been some months in London that I discovered how often I exposed myself to ridicule by the repeated use of this verb. My new friend B******, of the Inner Temple, who has a profound knowledge of every subject but the law, as he is one of those assiduous benchers described by Pope,

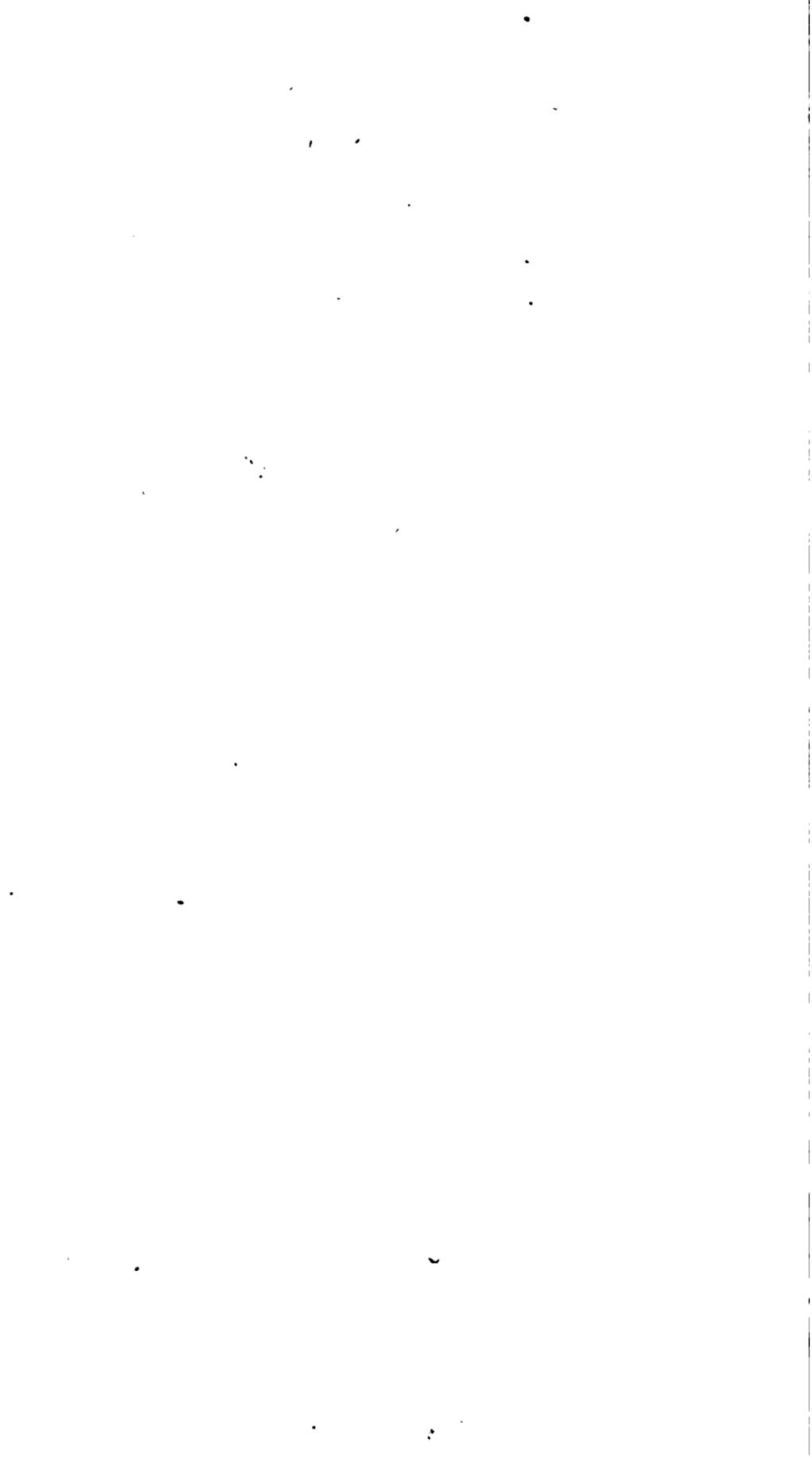
"Who pens a sonnet, when he should engross,"

pointed out to me this *provincialism*, as he styled it. What is the reason, he inquired, that you New-Englandmen are always *guessing*? I replied, coolly, because we imagine it makes us appear very *clever fellows*. Now, here, to my astonishment, B***** was in the same predicament as myself; although he had repeated *clever* and *clever fellow* perhaps twenty times in this interview, he had not noticed it: he was a gentleman of too refined a taste to advocate this *Alsatia* term, but would hardly be persuaded of its exu-

berant use until I had drawn his attention to it in conversation with several of his countrymen—and was at length obliged to send him half a sheet of extracts, in prose and verse, to convince him of its absurd recurrence in the modern English fine writing. But B***** is really a *clever fellow*, learned and candid, terms seldom united by a London *copula*, and we agreed to assist each other in devesting our style of these silly colloquisms. Soon after, B***** said to me, with earnestness, “ now you have read Boswell, you must “ acknowledge Dr. Johnson to have been “ a very *clever fellow*.” “ I guess he was,” I replied.

If, however, I should be requested to note some *shibboleth* to distinguish an Old from a New-Englandman it would not be like the Israelites in pronunciation, nor yet in expression or accent—not in words but in mode. An Englishman puts and answers a question directly, a New-Englandman puts his questions circuitously and

As you are a very *clever fellow* and *I guess* you are wearied by this time, I will conclude my letter, lest you should not be in a humour to say "that's a good
"one."



LETTER XXXIII.

*Literary larceny, forgery, and swindling
—Chatterton—Ireland, and Macpherson.*

LONDON.

My excellent Friend,

IN our simple country, whenever you hear theft or forgery mentioned, you are immediately impressed with the idea of some low fellow stealing a horse, or with Burroughs' issuing his Canada bank-bills; but here, in this sublime metropolis, where every virtue and every vice is carried to a refined extreme, are rogues found who can steal the cardinal virtues, and forge counterfeit immortality. Horace

might boast that his name was too hard a nut for envy to crack,

—“fragile quærens, illidere dentem
Offendit solidō”—

but if ancient Rome had been like modern London, the Augustan poet could not have passed one half the *via sacra* before he might have been robbed of his *monumentum ære perennius*, and his flattery *ad Mecænam* into the bargain.

There are several instances mentioned of persons who have borrowed or purloined original manuscripts, and sold them to the booksellers ; and some have had the daring effrontery to print their own names in the title-page, as the authors, thus almost literally stealing the writer's fame. A droll instance was mentioned to me by Mr. Wright, a respectable bookseller in St. John's Square, Clerkenwell :—One of these literary pilferers had surreptitiously taken, from a gentleman in Litchfield, a fine address to the

king, on the peace in 1783, written in *blank verse*. He unblushingly printed it with his name glaring in capitals on the title-page. A friend, complimenting him on his work, observed, that the verse was very elegant. “ Verse !” exclaimed our adventitious author ; “ dear sir, you have “ not read my address—it is not verse, “ there is not a single rhyme in it : No, “ no, I leave it to your Priestleys, your “ Prices, and your Franklins, to write “ poetry, and sich like stuff.”—Do not laugh—I’ll assure you it was no laughable matter to the real author ; it cost him a large sum, to the editors of newspapers and magazines, to reclaim his own work. For the amusement of the town, their respective rights to the contested poem was disputed by the hackney writers, and eleven sixpenny pamphlets printed, abounding with very ingenious arguments on both sides ; and long before the natural parent could prove his kindred to the foundling, the putative father had obtained

a snug birth in the customs, as the meed of oblation to majesty. The question still remains undecided in the popular opinion. The advocates for the thief are numerous, although they acknowledge the Litchfield gentleman could have written as elegantly, and might have composed this—and that if the putative father wrote it, it must have been a miracle. *I* had the curiosity to read this address, and found, to my surprise, that he whom I supposed the real author possessed but little more right to it than his rival, for I found that, excepting a simile about the oak's becoming more vigorous and flourishing when it is cropt, in allusion, I imagine, to the dismemberment of the colonies, all that was valuable was taken from Waller's Address to King Charles II. upon his majesty's happy return.

But there is yet a viler practice, too common in England; writers of real merit, who are popular, frequently loan, and sometimes, I fear, sell, their names,

and permit themselves to be announced to the public as authors of very inferior, and often very dull performances. There may be some excuse, as there may be a powerful temptation, for an ignorant and conceited fellow to pilfer the plumes of science—but how men of genuine genius and learning can stoop to this base folly is astonishing. They condemn, with great sensibility, those who, from vanity or want, purloin the works of others ; not reflecting that he who gives currency to that which is base, by gilding it with the bullion of his name, does more injury to the reading world than he who ushers into it what is intrinsically valuable under a worthless name : it is swindling in essence—it is defrauding the purchaser by false tokens. If not in a legal, in a moral view, he who lends his name to accelerate the sale of a worthless work should be held in the same estimation with him who gilds brass beads and vends them for pure gold.

But petit larceny and swindling are not the only crimes perpetrated in the English republic of letters. The learned complain that forgery is committed with astonishing effrontery. We have read of the forgery of deeds and other instruments : indeed, the sessions' papers mention an instance, sadly ludicrous, of some villains having forged a will, put a pen into the hand of the corpse, and forced the words indicative of the publication of it, into the mouth of the dead man, which they withdrew, and then swore, boldly, before the Probate, that they saw the deceased set his hand to the will, and that " he published it to be his last will and " testament" were the last words that came from his mouth. But these were clumsy prevaricators, calculated to impose upon the credulity and obtain the sanction of an ecclesiastical court. It remained for Chatterton and Ireland, by more acute and bolder daring, to establish the superiority of lettered genius over the awkward

finesse of unlettered ingenuity, and to forge the works of those who had been buried for centuries. In the year 1768, Chatterton, a boy of Bristol, then scarcely fourteen years of age, ushered into notice certain poems which purported to have been written by Thomas Rowley, a monk of the 15th century. The boy had written the poems on parchment smoke-dried, to give it the appearance of antiquity—suited the idiom and the orthography to the age in which they were pretended to have been written—and even wrote the rhyme in the mode we arrange prose, which was the economical fashion of that day—and asserted that he found them in a chest, in a room over the chapel in Radcliffe Church, which chest was called Canynge's, as containing certain deeds of benefaction which had been executed to the church by a merchant of that name, who lived in the reign of Edward the Fourth. The lovers of antiquity pored over the black letter with their accustomed enthusiasm,

while the lovers of poetry read the poems with delight for their strong expression and beautiful imagery ;—and they might both have been delighted with more from the same copious source, but a puerile curiosity, which may be compared to a child who breaks his fiddle to discover whence the sound proceeds, was to be satisfied. Where did he procure these poems ? are they original ? did he write them himself ? could he write them ? are they a mere fabrication ? was the cry among the learned. A jury of antiquarians *de ventre temporis inspiciendi* was impanelled ; Canynge's chest was found ; it was proved that Chatterton had access to it—it was empty, but had contained parchments which no one had the curiosity to have inspected ; but, unluckily, some modern words, and a few Arabic numerals, raised a doubt—and, to the immortal honour of the genius of Chatterton, the poems were cast in the verdict ; principally from the consideration that no man

in the age of Edward the Fourth, and they might have added in the present, could have written so finely. Upon this detection of the fraud, Chatterton, instead of being cherished by patronage, and a right direction given to his erring infant course, was condemned and avoided as if deeply stained with the moral turpitude of a man grown gray in villainy ; and this wonderful boy, more precious than a whole theoretic corps of infant Rocii, after making an abortive attempt to support himself by writing for the periodical papers, in the midst of the opulent and enlightened city of London, at the age of 17 years, was driven to suicide to avoid the pressing ills of hunger and poverty ! The English now pride themselves in his genius, and deeply regret his untimely death. A splendid edition of his works has been published, and every memorial of his brief life carefully collected. A learned nobleman, who had spent a long life in collecting and hoarding up the rubbish and chaff

of ancient lore, but who esteemed the pearls of Chatterton as the cock in Æsop's Fables did the jewel which he found on the dunghill, was obliged to apologize to the public for his neglect of the boy bard. And both antiquarians and amateurs of poetry now gather round the tomb of Chatterton and lament the national loss with emotions of mingled shame and grief.

Ireland, a man of mature years, pretended that he had found certain original writings of Shakespear, and even produced a play written with so close an imitation of some of the minor dramas of that immortal bard that it was actually exhibited upon the stage, and afterwards published : and not only the undiscerning vulgar, but many gentlemen of philological and antiquarian research pronounced it genuine, and defended its authenticity against the sceptics. The style, idiom, metaphors, similes, quaint expressions, and appropriate language of the characters intro-

duced were so accurately copied, that, to the credit of the fabricator, a mere mistake in using paper of later manufacture than the days of Elizabeth was the principal circumstance which led to the discovery of the fraud. Upon the detection, the same clamour was raised against him as against the unfortunate Chatterton, and similar attempts were made to abash him with obloquy and ignominy, but he turned upon his pursuers, and declared, in print, that he meant merely to expose the ignorance and credulity of the London literati. Excepting those who are the objects of it, every one inclines to laugh at the joke ; but, nevertheless, Ireland's reputation as an author is irreparably injured, and if he should, hereafter, produce a drama equal to Hamlet, it would probably be hissed from the stage.

A question naturally arises, if these persons had sufficient ability to produce works equal to, or, at least, with difficulty discernible from, those they imitated, and,

consequently, superior to those of the present degenerated day, why not have honoured and employed them? If a man should imitate as nearly the painted glass of the monkish, the perpetual or horribly inextinguishable fire of the ancient, or the sympathetic needle of the fanciful ages—by which modern churches might be ornamented; tombs, and cities like tombs, enlightened; ships burnt; and absent lovers be enabled to “annihilate both time “and space;” ought we to refuse the imitator a patent because he had endeavoured to pass off his first models as the works of those great masters who flourished in times when these rarities were brought to the greatest perfection? Michael Angelo Buonarotti, when the Italians were more enthusiastic in their veneration for the antique than the English ever were, chisselled a statue of a sleeping Cupid, in the style of the Grecian school in its happiest period; he stained the marble and mutilated the god, to give the

statue an appearance of antiquity, and, finally, buried it in a garden in Rome, pretending it was discovered by accident: it was produced, and acknowledged to be the work of ancient times. Michael Angelo then, boldly, claimed his own work, and produced an amputated limb, as unquestionable evidence of his claim. The Cognoscenti of Rome, in the 15th century, instead of contemning, maligning, and abandoning Michael Angelo, more wisely concluded that the man who had genius and taste to imitate the ancient masters should be encouraged to adorn modern times, by his wonderful powers: and Michael Angelo erected the church of St. Péter's, in Rome—that admirable structure which the united taste of the world pronounces the phoenix of modern architecture, and which the English travellers are constrained to acknowledge, would even rival St. Paul's if it were not considerably larger, and had not been a house of worship for the papists.

Now, what have Chatterton and Ireland done more than Michael Angelo ? They have produced, like him, imitations of elder genius—but they have excelled the Italian artist in modesty, that unerring index of merit ; they did not, boldly, claim their own exquisite performances—the learned were obliged to force them to acknowledge what all might be proud to own. Might it not have been expected that the English, like the Italians, would have honoured, rewarded, and employed them ? That they might not want new emissions of the black letter of the monk Rowley, might be pardonable—but the man who could imitate the sublime, the immortal, the hitherto unrivalled Shakespeare, should have had a statue erected to his honour whilst living, and an honourable place in Westminster-Abbey, or St. Paul's, designated for his mausoleum when dead. But, to the disgrace of English patronage, Chatterton swallowed poison, and the great Ireland, the second

Shakespear of England—a man who might, probably, have raised the Thalian glory of the reign of George the Third above that of the Virgin Queen—is now treated with affected contempt, and his forgeries on the bank of Parnassus are held, apparently, in as much detestation as forgeries upon the bank of England !

If a solution should be required to this enigma, I can only answer that literature is a trade in England ; and the making of books, and the vending the copy-right, is as much a handicraft occupation, upon which a person depends for his daily maintenance, as the making and vending patent boots ;—for, in this commercial land where every thing is bought and sold, the sallies of fancy may be bartered for cheese and porter, and works of imagination are chattels personal, which may produce to the author bread, and even wealth, and sometimes fame ; they are therefore, like other property, protected by the municipal law—but as that law

does not contemplate the counterfeiting the writings of defunct poets, as an injury to the living, these forgers are not obnoxious to the criminal code. Those, however, who are interested by taste in supporting the value of these precious metals of genius, supply this defect in the law by raising a violent and opprobrious clamour against any who are guilty of such literary felony. Again, whenever one of these Parnassian forgeries is attempted, the learned, as if by instinct, immediately divide in sentiment as to its authenticity, and fill the town with controversial pamphlets; and, as most of their modern books are made up by plagiarisms from old works, the English book-makers are admirably qualified to detect literary fraud —the trick is soon exposed, and the fabricator must be consigned to contempt. Those who detected him, to magnify their own services, will abuse him, while his former advocates endeavour to conceal

the mortification of defeat in declamations against his turpitude.

But there is a third, and more substantial reason to be offered why the English consign this second Shakespear to contempt. They have so long prided themselves in this great master of the drama and the passions, that they are ashamed to confess that *he* can be imitated whom they have, with so much national pride, pronounced to be inimitable.

From some of these motives a long and severe contest has been maintained upon Macpherson's translation of the Poems of Ossian, in which the great Dr. Johnson, styled by these moderns the Colossus of English literature, took a decided part. He insisted that he would not credit the translation as genuine until he saw the original Erse manuscripts;—as if poetry could not exist without being written. Did the great doctor ever see the original manuscript of a Lapland ode? have not the bards, or prophets, or priests—for they

likewise were bards, in all ages been the depositaries of the national poetry—and have not popular hymns and songs been preserved, with wonderful accuracy, in the memories of the common people? is it not the case in England, even now? does not language, and poetry, which is but a modulation of language, necessarily exist before written characters? The doctor was opposed by Macpherson, and, in a personal interview, it is said, the illustrious moralist and philologist detonated in a language, if moral, not extremely philosophical; in terms, I am told, for the honour of his work, not to be found in his Dictionary. He observed, to one of his humble friends, a few days after, “Sir, I “knew the Scot to be a liar, and I enun-“ciated in the vernacular of a scoundrel.” But maugre the doctor’s *argumentum ad hominum*, the authenticity of the poems has found numerous advocates. The Scotch enthusiastically admire them; and if what is now held by them to be a trans-

lation from the ancient Erse could be proved, to their satisfaction, to have been fabricated, they would admire it the more, because it was made by a Scotchman—that is, if the character given of that people by Dr. Johnson, and related to me by an old gentleman, Mr. J. M******, who was in habits of intimacy with that Diogenes of modern colloquy, be correct.—On a certain occasion, when the authenticity of the Poems of Ossian was the common topic, and Dr. Johnson was disgusting every man of common sensibility who unfortunately disagreed with him on that subject, Mr. M***** modestly observed, “Doctor, there are many learned, “and even pious men in Scotland, who “profess to be convinced that the translation is a correct version of the originals; “they, certainly, are possessed of the best “means of detecting imposition if any “exists; may I not place, safely, some “reliance on their testimony?” Johnson—“No, sir, you cannot, safely, rely on them;

" a Scot, sir, prizes a national fiction more than an exotic truism." The old gentleman mentioned, with apparent chagrin, that he had sent this anecdote to Mr. Boswell, one of the biographers of Dr. Johnson, but as it was accompanied with one not quite so respectful to a nobleman whom Boswell was then flattering, he imagined as that biographer could not decently insert the one without the other, he had concluded to omit both. Mr. M***** added he had hopes of having them both published in a note, stating Boswell's sycophancy, in an expected new edition of Sir John Hawkins's life of Johnson, which, he observed, after all, gave the most accurate picture of the great moralist, although rather in the Rembrandt style. But I am digressing too widely. The Scotch after having sustained with fortitude and success the repeated attacks of Johnson and his coadjutors, are now attacked more seriously, from an unexpected quar-

ter. Johnson disputed the existence of the Erse originals—the Irish have since acknowledged their existence, but insist, with some show of argument, that the bard with his harp and heroes were all Irish, and charge Macpherson with having garbled the original text to give to Ossian, his beauties and his warriors, a “local ‘habitation and a name’ in Scotland. This contest is not yet decided, but is combated with great spirit: to which side victory will incline, is, perhaps, only known to certain booksellers, who, as they subsidize the combatants on both sides, could, probably, inform which party they intend shall wear the laurel. Although both these disputes are yet undecided, the wars of Fingal and Oscar are read with pleasure in England.

In our happy land, far removed from any interest in the combats of these lettered gladiators, we, who prize books, as the principles of our excellent republican government teach us to value men, not for

their origin but their intrinsic merit—we, read Ossian's Poems with *delight*; and, surely, the heroic ardour, the dignified friendship, the strength, purity, and sublimity of love, and the sweet remembrance of departed worth which they inspire, are highly calculated to rectify the passions, and to amend while they delight us.

Remember me as I ought to be remembered to those I love. Say what is proper to Amelia, of which she will have the condescension to judge. I send little Francis a patent purse, with some medals and new coins: the purse will have this advantage, that when he has wit enough to open it himself he will have prudence enough to spend its contents economically.—Although we are divided by the Atlantic, recollect we are near in friendship.

LETTER XLII.

Medical, mechanical, and culinary quacks.

LONDON.

My excellent Friend,

THERE is no order of men more uniformly the objects of ridicule, among the English, than quack doctors, and yet there is no people more constantly the dupes of their artifice ; they are held up to contempt on the stage—the regular physicians are embodied against them—the prejudicial and deleterious effects of their nostrums are exposed in the daily papers, and every decent man you converse with affects to despise them. The confidence reposed in them, by the common people, is a subject of frequent la-

mentation with the learned, which they attribute to every cause but the right. The fact is, the belief in panaceas is a national weakness. In analogy to the maxim of the English common law, that there is no possible injury without a remedy, so they conceive there is no bodily ill without a nostrum ; and most nostrums, like the philosopher's stone which was imagined to turn all metals into gold, are supposed to convert all diseases into health. It is not the common people alone who give credit to these pernicious whimsicalities. The celebrated Berkley, Bishop of Cloyne, known with us by the epithet Immortal, published a treatise on the virtues of tar-water. This nauseating beverage was to eradicate disease, and stock the British isles with Methuselahs. The English read the prelate's book with rapture—every house was furnished with a tar-bucket—the people drank copiously, and fancied they quaffed immortality. To this whim succeeded the filings of steel. Now

we hear little of chalybeates, but fixed air is to conquer disease, and set death at defiance. It is not a century since the parliament voted a national premium to a physician, for the invention of a wonder-working fever powder, the basis of which, by chymical analysis, has since been discovered to be arsenic. Should the English literati, then, be surprised at the credulity of their common people when their men of science have promulgated nostrums, and their national legislature sanctioned empiricism? But to whatever cause this national weakness may be imputed, certain it is that these infallible medicines are no longer vended to the mere vulgar, as in the days of their ancestors, in six-penny packets from the stage of the mountebank; but quackery has now its wholesale-stores, and the nation for its customers—and these wise people are content to risk life, or, at least, jeopardize health, upon the uncertain operation of nostrums, which, if, possibly, efficacious

in some diseases, and in some habits of body, are, probably, highly injurious or deleterious in others : but the infatuated Englishman reads a forged list of cures, and parts with his money and health for the dose, although the quack, in his printed bill, candidly cautions him “against counterfeits, as such are abroad.”

But there are, in London, a species of *mechanical quacks*, who do not intermeddle with disease, but profess to supply the deficiencies of the human frame. They undertake to furnish the blind with artificial eyes, and the cripple with arms and legs, which, with grave effrontery, they assure you are superior to the natural. In passing the street, this morning, I had a handbill of a celebrated optical quack thrust into my hand—I shall bring it home with me for your amusement. He describes and magnifies the excellences of his artificial eyes, and asserts that they excel the natural in displaying the finer and nobler emotions of the soul ; he

beasts of a number of belles and beaux who, by the aid of *his optics*, have made wonderful havoc in the wars of Venus—and then, in imitation of the vendors of patent medicine, he introduces the certificates of sundry ladies and gentlemen to the praise of his wares, sworn to, in form, before the Lord Mayor and other city magistrates, and forwarded to him upon a mere impulse of gratitude. One of these certificates is so ludicrous that I cannot, now, determine whether the writer meant it seriously, or as a satire upon the medical quacks.

“ John Maylem swears that he is a man
 “ of independent fortune ; that at Bath,
 “ the last season, one morning at the
 “ pump-room, he was struck with the
 “ charms of a most enchanting young
 “ lady. Amidst the blaze of her beauty
 “ he felt himself peculiarly impressed
 “ with the fascinating glances of her bri-
 “ liant eyes : upon after acquaintance,
 “ although he was not insensible to the

“ expression and good sense which beam-
 “ ed from her right eye, yet, the mild
 “ serenity of the left gave such happy
 “ presage of that suavity of temper which
 “ promised a plenteous harvest of conju-
 “ gal peace, that he prosecuted his suit,
 “ and has now the felicity to subscribe
 “ himself the happy husband of one of
 “ the best wives in England.

“ John Maylem.

“ *N. B.*—Mrs. Maylem’s, *then* Miss
 “ Mary Annabella Thwackery’s, left eye,
 “ was made at the optical repository, No.
 “ 43, &c. &c.

“ Sworn before

“ Benj. Hammet, Alderman,
 “ Portsoken Ward.”

Yesterday, in company with my friend
 B******, I visited a celebrated arti-
 ficer of *artificial legs*, and was highly
 amused—not merely with the cork pedes-
 tals which, by the help of a steel meta-
 tarsus, were almost as near an imitation
 of a natural foot as a barber’s block is to

the “human face divine” of some of the inhabitants of this city, - but it was delightful to hear the artist descant upon the excellences of his ware ; in truth, he had almost persuaded me to submit to amputation, with the same readiness with which a young lady submits her fine tresses to the scissors of the barber, to be replaced by a fashionable wig.

If this fellow had lived in the days of Richard the Third, how readily might that deformed tyrant have cheated Shakespeare of some of the finest descriptions in his celebrated tragedy. By the assistance of this admirable artist he might have rivalled Edward the First in shanks, and in lieu of his hunch have equipped himself with a back modelled from some Apollo of Belvidere, or *torso* of Hercules—and thus have confirmed the testimony of the Countess of Desmond, and reduced Horace Walpole’s historical doubt into certainty.

The artist insisted upon showing us a large file of letters, received from his customers, gratefully acknowledging the utility and beauty of his limbs, and pointing out certain advantages which had been discovered by practice. B******, who is somewhat of a wag, mentioned that he had lately received a letter from a friend in Jamaica, who had the felicity of being supported by a cork-leg from this repository. His West Indian friend, he observed, to his great surprise and comfort, had discovered a wooden-leg to be an infallible preservative against the sting of a mosquito—and that he was much envied, on this account, by the other inhabitants of the island. As this was an unheeded property in his chisselled flesh, the artist listened with great attention; indeed, he received it with such marked complacency that, when we returned to my lodgings, B***** threw the statement into the form of a certificate, and sent it to him—but having, unfortunately, added another

certificate, from an English officer in Canada, stating that wooden legs bade defiance to frost and foot-ball, the fellow, I conjecture, in the London phrase, "smoked "the quiz," and the certificates were not published.

But, of all the quacks who play upon English credulity, recommend me to Mr. John Perkins, formerly cook to the noble Lords Gower and Milbourne. He has published a book entitled "Every woman "her own Housekeeper, or the Ladies' "Library;" and being sensible, as, indeed, every man of common sense must be, that whoever eats of his made dishes would soon have occasion for physic, he has, very considerately, included in his book all the eminent nostrums and quack medicines of the day, with definitions of those diseases which are the necessary consequence of intemperance; and, for convenience, has arranged his dishes and diseases alphabetically, so that, as you turn his pages and cast your eyes on the

heads of his chapters, you might, at first view, imagine the book to be an ethical work, exhibiting the dreadful consequences of a life devoted to intemperance, or a satire upon good eating, for the arrangement of this culinary Juvenal presents the reader with

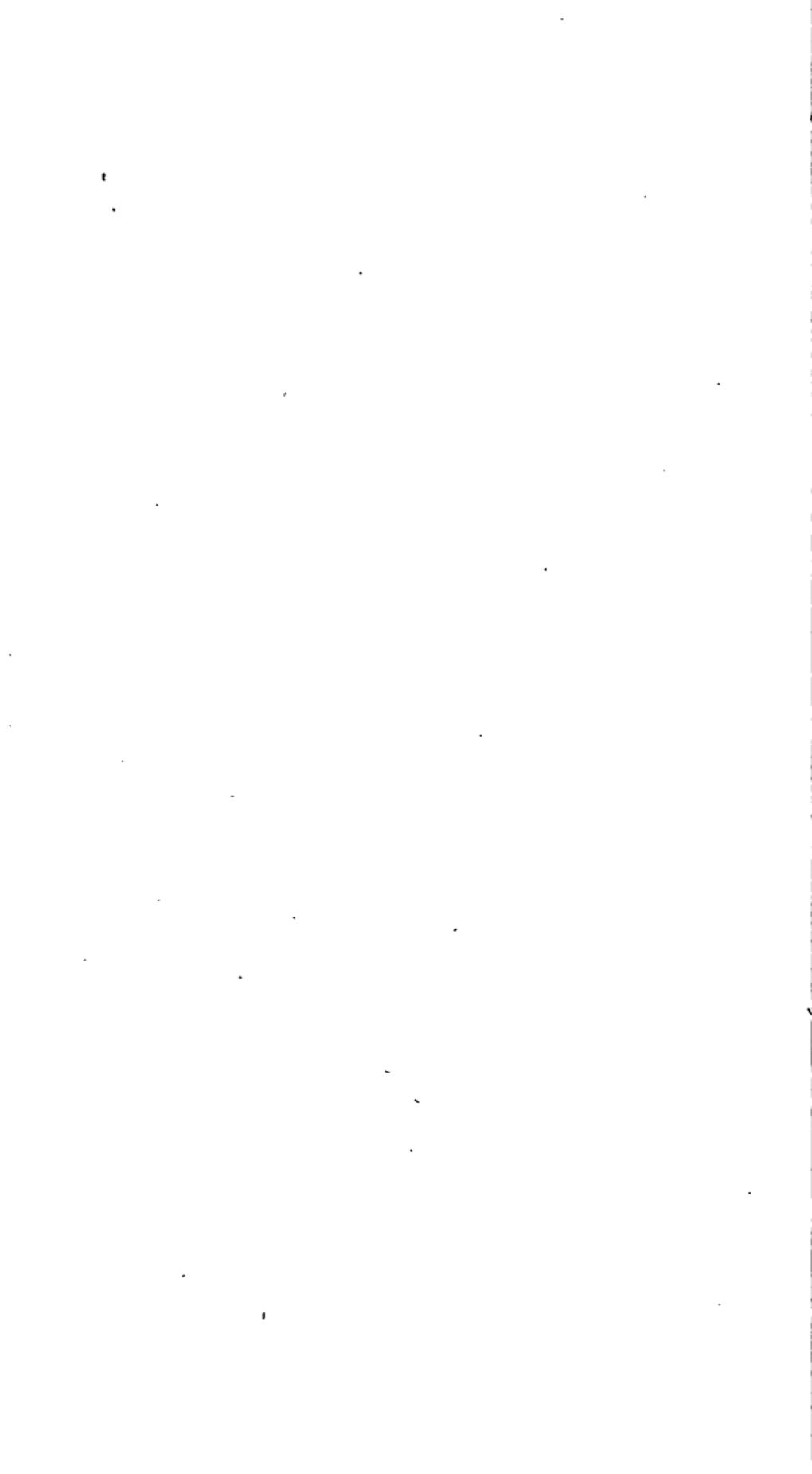
Apple-pye and Asthma,
Wine and Vomiting,
Potted Pigeons and Purges,
Custards and Colic,
Gravies and Gout,
Ragouts and Rheumatism,
Confectionaries and Consumption,
Jellies and Jaundice,
Soups and Sciatica,
Sauces and Scurvy,
Pickles and Piles,
Roasting-pigs and Pills,
Fricasees and Fevers,
Appetite and Apoplexy, and,
Drams and Death.

The apparent necessity, and peculiar convenience, of a book of this kind, pro-

duced so rapid a sale that nine editions have been published within a few years. The English epicure, with this precious book before him, may indulge to plethora, and set disease and death at bay : he may adopt the language of Cato, in Addison's celebrated soliloquy, and exclaim

“ Thus am I doubly armed ; my death my life,
“ My bane and antidote, are both before me :
“ This (*pointing to the receipt for a made dish*)
“ in a moment brings me to my end—
“ But this (*pointing to the quack medicine*)
“ informs me I shall never die.”

[The remainder of this letter consisted of a description of the English political quacks, but as it contained certain pointed observations which might be thought, by some, to deviate from the author's accustomed candour, it was deemed expedient to omit it.]



LETTER XLIII.

Prominent traits in the English character.

My excellent Friend,

YOU request a description of the city of London, a view of the administration of the British government and its fiscal concerns, with a character of the English people.

An English traveller, by the aid of a rapid tour through a country, and a month's residence in its capital, would render a minute account, much to the satisfaction of his own countrymen, although he might provoke the contempt and derision of the nation he attempts to describe. For my own part, I confess, I have not the time, talents, or, what is of equal importance, access to those sources

of information which might enable me to give a correct statement, or form a respectable opinion.

In lieu, therefore, of hasty descriptions, or jejune opinions, I send the latest edition of London and its environs, illustrated by engravings of its principal edifices. Two treatises on finance—one proving to demonstration, from authentic documents, that the fiscal concerns of the nation were never more flourishing ; that, by the miraculous aid of the sinking fund, the national debt is rapidly diminishing, and after about the same lapse of years in which the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, this nation will possess that land of ministerial promise where taxes shall no more be levied : the other proves to equal demonstration, and from documents as authentic, that the people are groaning indignantly under the burthens of fiscal oppression, and the nation on the verge of bankruptcy.

That you may have a correct view of the administration of government, I also send you five ministerial and ten opposition pamphlets ; three letters to a noble lord ; two speeches on the state of the nation, intended to be spoken in parliament ; an acrostic upon the minister ; a rebus and a charade upon a popular leader, and a conundrum on the heir apparent.

The description of London, so far as I have compared it, appears to me correct : from the other publications you can form your own opinion. I can assure you, from writings like these the people of England obtain their clearest view of their national prosperity or adversity.

Of the character of the English I can only send you a hasty sketch : I do not profess to furnish a finished picture, but a mere etching : indeed, I would willingly be excused, but as you insist on the English portrait from my pencil, reminding you of your promise, and of the emblem

of our old club-room, with its motto *sub rosa*, I will venture to delineate as it appears to me at first view.

In drawing a national character, we should endeavour to seize upon those prominent features which mark all ranks, and form the grand contour of a people. From inattention to this obvious rule, the English travellers are constantly producing their wretched daubings and caricatures of foreign nations. An English tourist may be compared to a painter who should attempt to paint a peacock from merely having seen his feet and legs. It is highly probable such an enlightened artist would give to the beautiful bird the body of a sheldrake, and the head of a goose—and, when he hung his picture in the exhibition room in Somerset-place, his countrymen would admire it as a faithful representation—and the whole nation, *including* those who had seen the beautiful bird, would sneer at the wretched taste of foreigners who could praise the splendid

attendant of Juno. An English traveller will depict a nation as rapacious and insolent, when the groundwork of his opinion is the overcharge of sixpence in the bill at some paltry inn, or the rough reply of some village magistrate to English hauteur.

I shall now attempt the English *national* traits, reserving to some future letter, or conversation, such peculiarities as may attach to a particular class, or to individuals, called, here, oddities, which may be considered rather as tumours, or excrescences, than as belonging to the national person of Englishmen.

When uncle Toby called upon Corporal Trim to write a list of the widow Wadman's perfections, he directed him to set down *humanity*, in capitals, as the first ; in enumerating the qualities of the English, I set down, in capitals, *vanity*.

The English verily believe they are the most enlightened people in the world ; the greatest in arts and arms ; the up-

rightest, the wealthiest, the wisest ;—(no, I will be candid, I believe they at times suspect they are not the wisest people ;)—in personal beauty and courage unrivalled; that they live under the best system of laws ever devised by the wisdom of man; and that, finally, they are—don't laugh, Frank—the *freest* people who ever existed in ancient or modern days !

This national vanity is conspicuous in the conversation and writings of every Englishman. The lower and middle classes express it boldly, whilst the higher have to make repeated drafts upon their politeness in order to conceal it. in company with foreigners. But the same weakness pervades all ranks; the vulgar believe that one Englishman can beat three Frenchmen: the well educated man does not credit this, but he will hardly be brought to confess the English were ever worsted in fair fight with equal numbers. He will even ridicule the national prejudice of the vulgar; but he will read,

with self-complacency, Judge Blackstone's insinuation that England was not completely conquered by William the Bastard. And, although English military tactics are held cheap by all other nations, and their armies have been beaten by the militia of the North, and the husbandmen and mechanics of South-America, and English cannon and colours may be found as trophies in almost every European nation, yet, the Englishman treasures in his memory the few military advantages his nation has gained—magnifies them into victories, and forgets repeated defeats. When the national troops are discomfited on every side his vanity is not suppressed; he recurs to history for the battles of Cressy and Poictiers, or to the stage for that of Agincourt—or cheers himself with the recital of the achievements of Marlborough—with English victories won by German courage, directed by the genius of Eugene. Are you disposed to contest the position that English military tactics

are held cheap by all other nations, I throw down my gauntlet—let the warlike Frederick of Prussia be the umpire, I will address myself to him:—"Sire, will your " majesty be pleased to inform why you " and the other continental powers, when " you league with the English in offen- " sive war, ever contract to find men, and " they money?" *Frederick*—"The rea- " son is obvious; we had rather have one " English guinea as an auxiliary, than ten " English soldiers."

A pleasant instance of English vanity is exhibited in Sir Robert Thomas Wilson's History of the British expedition to Egypt, under Sir Ralph Abercrombie:—A few days before the battle of Elhanka, fought between the Turkish troops under the immediate command of the Grand Vizir, and the French under General Belliard, the English commander in chief being apprized of the probability of the battle, and concluding that as the Turks were not Englishmen they must inevitably be

beaten, despatched an officer to the Grand Vizir, requesting him, earnestly, not to engage until supported by the English forces. The Grand Vizir treated the message with the contempt it merited, engaged the French, and gained the most brilliant victory of the campaign, which immediately led to the surrender of Grand Cairo, and eventually to the success of the expedition. Here was a check to national vanity which the author could not conceal ; but the English consoled themselves by ridiculing the tactics, the customs, and even the amusements of their gallant allies, and by insidiously intimating that if the Grand Vizir had been aided by five hundred English troops the victory would have been more decisive.

But Egypt, where this inflated display of national vanity was made, was destined, in a few years, to exhibit to the world the scene of its bitter mortification. There six thousand of the flower of the English armies were repeatedly defeated,

and, at length, disgracefully driven from its shores—not, indeed, by the Ottoman troops whom they had derided, but by the arms of the very offscouring of those Bedouin and Mamaluke freebooters who inhabit and infest that fertile country.

But the gas which inflates the full-blown bladder of English vanity is their government; a government, indeed, beautiful in theory, which Montesquieu has praised and other writers have extolled; a government whose civil laws are so voluminous and intricate as to form no comprehensible rule of action to the bulk of the people, and whose criminal code, by the almost uniform infliction of capital punishment, violates the moral sense of justice, and renders the laws of Draco, by comparison, a system of mercy; a government whose great object is the commercial aggrandizement of the nation, *per fas aut nefas*, and whose operation is to divide the community into but two sections, the rich and the poor, to render

the former wealthy beyond bound, and the latter miserable beyond bearing ; a government whose chief magistrate can do no wrong, but whose inferior agents are confessedly always in error ; a government which, by a scrupulous attention to the preservation of its ancient forms, secures the respect and attachment of its subjects, but, at the same time, by the dictatorial power of its parliament, can accommodate itself to meet all the exigencies which necessarily result from a change of manners and opinions at home, and from the mutable system of its foreign relations. That a whole people should be attached to such a government ; that they should even be vain of it, is pardonable, if not praise-worthy—it is a minor species of patriotism ; but English vanity does not rest here ; they not only believe their own government the most excellent, but that all other governments are so execrable that the subjects of them are wretched and disgusted, and would gladly emanci-

pate themselves from their thralldom for the glorious privileges of English domination—as if these islanders possessed the exclusive right of local prejudice. When they captured Buenos-Ayres there was not an Englishman doubted that it would be followed by the voluntary submission of all the Spanish colonies in South-America ; indeed, who among them could doubt that those poor, ignorant, cowardly, degraded, bigoted Spaniards would at once throw off the yoke of national, colonial, and ecclesiastical despotism, and prefer the English government to that of their mother country. Had wisdom, instead of vanity, presided in the English councils, they might have thought it possible for the Spanish colonists to possess some spice of that cardinal English virtue, national prejudice ; that they might, possibly, view their invaders as heretics and plunderers, or as, what is more abhorrent in the eyes of most civilized foreigners, *Englishmen*. After their shameful defeat

by Liniers, the English official despatches acknowledge they were so viewed by the Spanish colonists.

The English consoled themselves in their discomfiture by gravely observing "that the Spaniards in South-America" "were not sufficiently enlightened to enjoy" "the blessings of English government!"

Ha ! ha ! ha !

The English are not only vain of their military prowess and government, but of their *climate*. In this land of megrims, hypochondria, and blue devils, where the dense and sombre atmosphere presents, every day, an apology for suicide, and where the artist is obliged to import Italian skies to render English landscape visible, the inhabitants sit like frogs in a fen, croaking forth the delights of mist and mud ! That a mere London cit (who, by the way, in point of intellect and information, is about three degrees below our **** * **** * **** *) should pride himself in this torpid atmos-

pHERE IS NOT STRANGE ; BUT SHOULD HE HAVE
THE GOOD FORTUNE TO EMERGE FROM HIS NA-
TIVE FOG, AND ESCAPE TO SOME MORE GENIAL
CLIME,

“ WHERE THE GREAT SUN BEGINS HIS STATE,
“ ROB'D IN FLAMES AND AMBER LIGHT,

LIKE THE FIEND IN PARADISE,

“ WITH
“ JEALOUS LEER MALIGN HE'D EYE IT ASKANCE,
“ AND TO HIMSELF THUS PLAIN :—SIGHT HATEFUL
“ AND TORMENTING !”—

I well recollect a promenade in our Mall, last September ; it was one in succession of those fine days which beautify a New-England autumn ; the sky a deep blue, thinly spotted with light fleecy clouds ; the sun bright, but not glaring ; its heat not fervid, but cheering ; and the breeze just discernible by the rustling of the leaves. Such a day is one of those few common blessings which the Bostonians have sensibility to relish. Our party

was large, and we exhibited our enjoyment in that fine flow of spirits which such weather is calculated to excite. But, while we chatted and laughed, S*** W******, a young cit who had then just escaped from the mists of London, after making several very dolorous attempts to be merry, quitted our party, and, with his hat drawn over his eyes, his hands in his pockets, and his lips pouting a most disdainful whistle, paced the Mall alone. I had then very little conception of these amiable English peculiarities, and, with genuine Yankey freedom, accosted him :—“ Sir, you seem to be lonesome—“ I guess you are not well.” *Englishman*—“ Sir, your execrable clear sky is insuperable—it makes my head ache : Sir, “ I have been in Boston three weeks, and “ have not been blessed with the sight of “ a cloud as big as a blanket.”

I was told that this sagacious cit, in the evening, went to a smith’s-shop, closed the doors and the aperture of the chimney,

caused a fire to be made of damp earth coal, and boasted that in the midst of the smudge he had recruited his spirits by a very excellent imitation of the London atmosphere.

Indeed, these supercilious cits have given the name of "*London Smoke*" to a broadcloth of dingy hue, that the sombre light of their capital may be known as far as their commerce extends.

Another trait in the English character is a contemptuous prejudice against foreigners. The *canaille* of all countries will be coarse in their abuse, and will bestow the epithets (or what is significant of them) of scoundrel, coward, and fool, upon those who are the objects of it—but it is reserved to the vulgar Englishman, in his quarrel with a foreigner, to edge his scurility by annexing his national appellation as a mark of pointed contempt—and Dutch scoundrel, French coward, and German thick-skull, are familiar in his

abuse. If I recollect, some English periodical writer has noticed this.

This contemptuous prejudice against foreigners is not confined to the vulgar ; it is possessed, in a degree, by every Englishman. To inculcate it, seems to be an axiom of their state policy. To diffuse through the nation this detestable principle, their writers, and travellers, have formed characters, or rather caricatures, of every nation, which are so indelibly impressed, that an Englishman never sees a foreigner without insensibly attaching to him his supposed national character.

By the English the French are characterized as volatile, superficial, and cowardly ;

The Dutch as avaricious and stupid ;

The Germans as heavy-moulded, insensible, and ignorant ;

The Portuguese as diabolically vindictive ;

The Italians as effeminate, jealous, and lost to every sense of sexual virtue ;

The Spaniards as haughty, bigoted, poor, and miserable ;

The Russians as barbarous ; and,

The Americans as knaves.

Even the Scotch, Welch, and Irish, although integrals of the empire, are subjects of this contemptuous character.

The Scotch are poor, parsimonious, and craving ;

The Welch poor and proud; and,

The Irish—while the Irish are content to fight their battles, and submit to their despotism, the English are content to laugh at their bulls.

But you will, perhaps, say, “ is this a “ just representation of English opinion ? “ is there not an enlightened portion of “ the nation superior to these unmanly “ prejudices ? ” —I refer you to the English writers. I will not confine you to the theatrical. Produce me a single author who has described or drawn the

character of a foreign nation, in whose book may not be found some ungenerous and odious comparisons to the disadvantage of that people. It is true, the phrase may be polished, and the abuse softened, but every English writer on the subject of foreign nations is as essentially prejudiced as certain London cits, who visit you, who verily believe that all nations, compared with the English, are cowards, and every foreigner ridiculous if he speaks broken English.

Another distinguishing trait in the English character, is to prefix the name of English to every thing they consider superlatively excellent. So far as this is applied to horses, bulls, and bull-dogs, it cannot be disapproved; indeed, it is wonderfully applicable to the last, as I have been informed the peculiar characteristic of this English native is to seize upon every thing in his way, and not to quit his grasp until compelled by superior force, although it should cause his own

destruction. But even the more exalted qualities of the soul are distinguished, in London, as of English manufacture ; and the cardinal virtues are exhibited, in this city, like quack medicines with the national patent and the seal of the inventors accompanying them. Hence we have *English courage*, *English honour*, *English wisdom*, *English integrity*, and *English justice* ; and they might add *English hauteur*, *English credulity*, *English hypochondria*, and *English cullibility*.

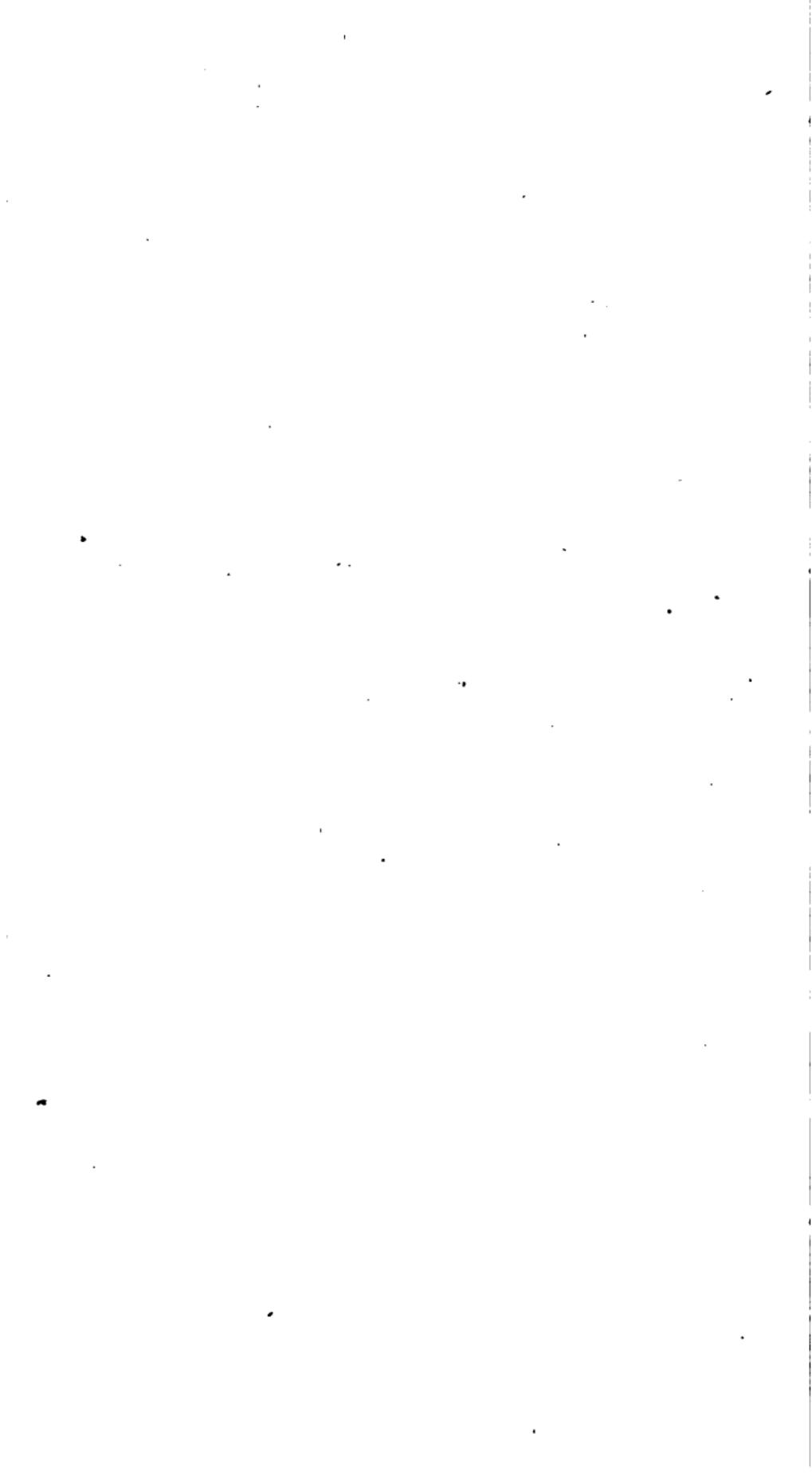
I could readily display instances of these, but shall refer you to English annals for the proof of them.

Ha ! ha ! ha !—what a bore ! and have you, my early friend, whilst reading this farrago, suffered yourself for a moment to suppose that I could vent seriously all this abuse. Whilst writing I anticipate its perusal : I see you read a paragraph, then turn to the subscription, read again, and then examine the handwriting, “ to be resolved if Brutus so

"unkindly knocked or no :" Be assured, then, if I could in serious mood asperse a great people in this manner, I should abhor myself, and feel degraded from the rank of intelligent beings, and reduced to a level with *English travellers*.

For if you could enjoy the opportunity I now have—if you could converse with the learned, associate with the polished, and be served by the friendly, among this people, your admiration, and, what is better, your affection for them, would increase; for amid all their weaknesses, and all their follies, they have many men, and *very many* women, many achievements and many virtues, of which they may justly be proud without the imputation of *vanity*.

Ever yours.



LETTER XLIV.

Introduction to the adventures of a young Bostonian, who went to London to establish a credit.

My excellent Friend,

BY the ship O. E. I received a letter from my father's old friend, the elder Mr. *****¹, desiring some information respecting his nephew, (from whom, it appears, he has received only one letter, merely announcing his safe arrival in London,) and requesting me to aid him with my friendship and advice. I do not apprehend any mischance has or will happen to him, but, if there should, I should be very loth to be the messenger of ill news to that respectable old gentleman.

I shall notice his letter in a way which shall be honourable to the nephew, and, consequently, pleasing to the uncle—and refer him to you for any further information, which, if adverse, you can temper, in the communication, so as to accord with the feelings of Mr. *****; whose heart is bound up in the young man.

The truth is, I have seen young ***** but once since we parted in Liverpool, two days after our arrival in port. I imagine he is pacing the same rounds of curiosity and amusement so commonly trod by our young Bostonians, and treasuring up a thousand fine sights to amuse and astonish the ladies on his return. About ten days after I arrived in this city, he called on me, dressed in the pink of the mode—his pockets full of cash, and his mouth full of wonder. He had been to dine with Mr. S. to whom his uncle consigned him with an invoice of pot-ash, old pewter, blubber-oil, and bees' wax, and the merchant had sent his clerk to shew

him the city. It is astonishing what a power of fine sights he had seen : he had seen the monument, which he assured me was almost as high as the old south steeple—and seemed delighted at the discovery that the great fire in London began in *pudding-lane* and ended at *pye-corner* : he had seen the lions, the queen's zebra stuffed, and a man who ate fire ;—he went to see a man who eat himself, but found this was a joke. He was going to set for his picture to Mather Brown ; and when he had seen the king, the infant Roscius, and the learned pig, he ~~guessed~~ he should go to *Brumagem* to see them make Whitechapel needles—and from thence to Liverpool, to get a tea-set of China ware which he had ordered to be marked with his aunt's cypher : that his counting-house friend had introduced him to several London bucks of the first water, and that he was going to be introduced to a young lady of quality, and great fortune, who, he told me as a great secret,

had fallen in love with him at the play-house.

Now, if you can pick out of this rhapsody any thing which can be consolatory to his uncle, pray communicate it. For my own part, I see nothing portentous in all this. I believe ***** will be amply qualified to compare notes, on his return home, with most of our young townsmen who have preceded him.

As I have received a bill of exchange upon Mr. S. I shall wait on that gentleman, and make some inquiries respecting our young traveller.

At all times, and on all occasions, believe me, most affectionately,

Yours.

LETTER XLV.

Strictures on the English language of the present day.

My excellent Friend,

YOU request my opinion of the English language, taken in comparison with the various languages of Europe, and desire me to recommend and convey to you the works of those authors of the present day who have written it in its greatest purity. I am incapable of opinion—perhaps no man can form an adequate estimation of his mother tongue. It is extremely difficult for a man to obtain such an intimate acquaintance with foreign languages as to enable him to compare them with his own ; for if he had the gift of tongues,

he could not form an impartial or correct judgment. To the asperities and gutturals of his own language his very organs of speech are adapted by early habit ; the harshness of enunciation is concealed by familiar use ; and the awkwardness of its idiom may appear even graceful. That language in which he can most readily convey his ideas, he will be prone to consider the best.

I can compare the French and English idioms, and prefer the latter ; whilst the Parisian, who understands just as much English as I do French, compares as I do, and gives the decided preference to the French. With some little smattering of Spanish, German, and Italian, and some knowledge of the French language, I prefer the English to them all : but I do not conclude I am certainly correct ; I can, however, give you the reason of my opinion.

I consider the Latin tongue in the Augustan age, and the Greek in all the

elder ages, to have been the noblest languages ; the best adapted to converse, to reason, to record human actions, to illustrate the arts and sciences, to aid the orator and the poet, to instruct and delight us in prose, and inspire the enthusiasm of verse. Whenever I would test the excellence of a modern language, I attempt to render some portion of the precious remnants of these divine tongues into it. If I discover, by the experiment, that the modern idiom essentially varies—if I find no word in the modern which will clearly express the full idea conveyed by the ancient—or if I am forced to circumlocution, and obliged to use three modern words to translate one of the ancient—or if, after all my paraphrase, I cannot render it, I conclude the modern language inferior ; and in proportion as one modern language bears this test better than another, I give it the preference. To this test I have repeatedly brought my native tongue, and, so far as I was able, tried the

experiment with some other modern languages, and I do maintain the English language to have the pre-eminence, because it approaches nearest to these my elevated standards of perfection ; to borrow a term from the chymists, the English has a nearer analogy with the precious metals of the Greeks and Romans.

Let me prevail on you, who are far better qualified than myself, to try this little philological experiment : translate, or, in London phrase, do, an ode of Anacreon into English. You will find yourself, it is true, necessitated to paraphrase, but still you can preserve the careless ease, the vivid fire, and glowing description of this gay sage : and if you lament the necessity of paraphrase, and are tempted to undervalue your native tongue, attempt to do an ode of Horace into French, and then if you are not very merry you will not be very wise.

I am yet more incapable of selecting any English authors of the present day, as

standards of purity in the language. Indeed, the perfectibility of language is as ridiculous as the perfectibility of man. Language, as pertaining to man, partakes of the laws of our nature : it is ever changing ; it has the incoherency and simplicity of youth, the vigour of manhood, and the decline and decrepitude of old age. This has been its fate in all ages : it has begun in barbarism ; had its age of elegance and refinement, and became nerveless and weak. The English language was in infancy in the thirteenth century ; it ripened into manhood under Queen Elizabeth ; added refinement to manliness under Queen Anne ; *but* is now on its decline. It approaches its second childhood ; it already betrays the garrulity and weakness of old age ;—it delights in gorgeous metaphors, in similes which sparkle but do not illustrate, and all the pretty prettinesses of verse-like prose.

To prevent this decay, to fix some standard of language, has been the *ignis*

fatuus of the learned in Europe. Numerous academies in the Italian states have attempted it in vain. The French literati, under the Bourbons, founded a national academy, the ostensible object of which was to rectify and give permanency to their language—but even under Louis the Great the attempt was vain. People would write and talk in their own way, and even the academicians themselves rebelled individually, against those literary canons which collectively they had promulgated.—Dean Swift, in England, in his celebrated letter to Lord Oxford, was pursuing the same will-o'-the-wisp ; and even if this philological philosopher's stone could have been discovered, and the standard of language fixed by act of parliament, like the Winchester bushel, would it not have been left to chance to decide whether they who had fixed it had hit upon the highest grade of perfection of which the language was capable, and might they not, by their officious inter-

meddling, have impeded its further progress?—But, in spite of all the learned can do to fix a *tower* standard for language, it will be subject to perpetual variance. New discoveries will call for new terms to express novel ideas, and the public taste, like the Centaur not Fabulous of Dr. Young, with her bauble and her rattle, would incessantly call upon language to follow her capricious steps.

The English language appears to me to be in the same early progress of decline as the Roman under Nero; for if, by metempsychosis, the soul of Petronius Arbiter could animate an English author of the present day, his works would be hot-pressed, reviewed with approbation, and demand numerous editions.

But, if I am mistaken in my reveries, and now is the accepted time and day of perfection of the English language, which, by the by, the English, like the Romans in the days of Silius, Statius, and Valerius Flaccus, and, indeed, like every

other people, fix upon their own æra—(for a nation can never judge of its own decline in language, the corruption of its taste ever keeping pace with the decadency of genius)—if I am mistaken, and there are works edited in the reign of George the Third which may be read as models of that perfection, I assure you it would be impracticable, from any information I receive here, to designate them. For if I had power to summon a convection of English literati, and could raise up Bentley as their president and Dr. Johnson as their secretary, it is not probable that this learned and critical body could unite a majority in favour of any one author. The English reviewers assume to be associations of the learned, and yet, it is obvious, they differ as widely in their opinions of the style and subject-matter of books as the various readers of them.

Neither can I obtain information from individuals. One will present me Hume's

History of England, another Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire ; and, yet, these two celebrated authors differ as much in style as a plain, substantial English broadcloth does, in texture and appearance, from a stiff brocaded lustering, shot with gold tinsel. In a word, I ask for elegant wit, and they hand me Peter Pindar—I inquire for sublimity, and they present me Della Crusca.

In lieu, therefore, of presuming to direct, I send you a trunk of modern books, with a bundle of reviews. By the same vessel you will receive a variety of India and English pickles : if, in eating the latter, you should want a director to your taste, I can send you an assortment of *culinary reviews*, vulgarly called cook-books, and assure you I would as readily rely upon them, in the articles of their criticism, as I would upon English reviewers to cater for me in a mental repast.

Yours truly.

P. S.—A few days since I waited upon Mr. S. and, in course of conversation, inquired after young *****. From this gentleman I learnt he is gone to Bath. I communicated the uncle's letter to him. He observed, he was so immersed in business he could not be supposed to notice very particularly the conduct of a young stranger over whom he had no control: his people had put up a handsome invoice for him, and he had heard nothing to the disadvantage of the young gentleman, but, as I was a correspondent of his uncle's, he would observe, he thought ***** had drawn liberally upon him;—however, as he understood the old gentleman to be a man of property, and his letter of credit was not restricted, he should advance to the amount of the consignment at least.

FINTS.

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